



# TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

1892—1916

BY  
VISCOUNT GREY  
*of*  
FALLODON, K.G.

PEOPLE'S LIBRARY EDITION. IN THREE  
VOLUMES

VOLUME ONE

H&S

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LIMITED LONDON

*Made and Printed in Great Britain.*  
*Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd. London and Aylesbury.*

# DEDICATION TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 1925

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN WRITTEN IN  
INTERVALS OF QUIET AT HOME IN THE COUNTRY DURING  
THE LAST TWO YEARS. THERE MY WIFE READ OVER  
TO ME THAT PORTION OF THE MS. THAT I HAD  
WRITTEN EACH DAY. IN THIS WAY THE FORM  
AND EXPRESSION OF THE ORIGINAL DRAFT  
WERE OFTEN GREATLY IMPROVED BY  
HER SUGGESTION OR CRITICISM.  
WITHOUT HER CONSTANT HELP  
AND ENCOURAGEMENT THE  
WORK WOULD NEVER  
HAVE BEEN DONE.





## INTRODUCTION TO THE PEOPLE'S LIBRARY EDITION

IN the first two pages of the Introduction to the original edition of this book foreboding is expressed that the time has not yet come when any book about the war can have a chance of impartial consideration. This foreboding has in part been justified by some criticisms and attacks that have naturally come mainly from German and pro-German sources.

All these criticisms, however, have been much more than counter-balanced by the general reception of the book. As far as the author can judge, it has been generally accepted as what it was intended to be—a true account of British Foreign Policy in the years that preceded 1914 and in the earlier stages of the war. For this favourable reception I wish to express grateful acknowledgment. It has been sufficient to provide encouragement and justification for the issue of a popular edition.

Perhaps the most unreasonable criticism that I have seen is one which complains of the book for not taking notice of foreign documents that have come to light only since the war and which were not known to me or to the British Foreign Office while I was there. Neither my own thoughts and actions nor British policy before the war could be influenced by things we did not know at the time. Such documents and revelations must

## INTRODUCTION TO THE

be studied by the general historian who wishes to write an account of the policies of other countries ; but this book does not pretend to aim at anything so ambitious. One who had been at the Foreign Office for fourteen years in the period from 1892 to 1916 was necessarily in a position to write with special knowledge and authority about British policy up to the time when he left office. That is what *Twenty-five Years* professes to do. It is not reasonable to blame the author for not having written a book of an entirely different kind for which he had no special qualifications or knowledge.

It may be worth noting here that I have had one criticism from an Allied source on the omission to notice in the book a certain post-war revelation that is very unfavourable to Germany. The answer to all such criticism, whether from a German or an Allied source, is the same : the post-war revelations are not relevant to the scope and purpose of the book.

It has been asked—and this is a British comment—why, if it is now so plain that the European system of separate alliances and great armaments tended to war, was this not foreseen, or seen at the time ? The answer is complete but is a platitude. In all human affairs, as in everything else that is not subject to mathematical calculation, the retrospect is much clearer than the prospect.

It is by the nature of things much easier to see what has happened than to predict what will happen. For instance, we can to-day, with much greater precision, analyse the causes of the Great War than we can estimate what its ultimate consequences will be. So before 1914 it was much easier to see how the European system of alliances and counter-alliances had come into existence, than it was to foresee the result it was going to produce. Even if this had been foreseen, what more could the British Government have done in the years that preceded the war? The Navy was kept up to a war strength; the Expeditionary Force was ready and equipped according to the best military opinion of the day. An attempt to build up our Expeditionary Force to Continental size would have precipitated war, perhaps when we were in a transition stage; certainly before our larger army was ready, and probably at a moment disadvantageous to those who afterwards became our Allies. The war might thus conceivably have been won by Germany, and Britain have incurred, at any rate in appearance, the odious responsibility of having precipitated the war by militarism.

It is more reasonable to ask whether the system itself of these alliances could have been altered, if its consequences had been foreseen by any British Government. The

## INTRODUCTION TO THE

system began with the Triple Alliance; by the end of the century it was firmly riveted upon Europe. British statesmen had but two alternatives—to make the best of it and adjust themselves to it, or to have nothing to do with it. They chose finally the former course. How Britain came to be involved in the system at all, the limits of her participation, and the policy she pursued are described in this book. British Governments had at first preferred isolation; the pressure of events brought them to feel first that complete isolation was uncomfortable, and then that it was unsafe. The truth of this is one of the many things that in retrospect are seen more clearly. The danger of complete isolation was greater than we knew at the time. And to anyone who thinks that isolation would have kept us out of war, I would put these questions. Would you, before 1914, have denounced and withdrawn from the guarantee of Belgium? Have you considered what would have been the effect of such a step in Europe? And if the guarantee had not been denounced, what answer would you have given when Belgium, who had behaved with irreproachable correctness and innocence, was invaded and appealed to Britain for help?

It is stated in the Introduction that the main purpose of this book is not to make the vindication or condemnation of any

country the final word. For this reason no pains were taken to examine closely or to press home the question of war guilt. It was impossible to avoid the subject altogether, and there are passages which either directly or by implication convey an opinion on it. One criticism has thus been elicited from a German source, which ought to be noticed. There is, I think, some force in it, and it was first expressed to me by a German, who visited me in London. It was presented in a spirit so fair that it ought to be fairly met. I cannot recall his exact words, but what follows is the substance of what he said.

"You seem to have thought, in the weeks preceding the war, that it was only Germany that counted, that it was only in Berlin that it was worth while to speak. Believe me, this was not so. You should have spoken in Vienna. We, in Germany, could not control Austria, to whom, through the Kaiser, we were committed, and whom we were bound to support."

From other sources it has been represented that Germany did not feel strong enough to control Austria. She knew that Italy had become an uncertain partner in the Triple Alliance; Austria was therefore the only friend on whom Germany could count, and this friend would have been alienated if too masterful a line had been taken in Vienna. It seemed to me in 1914 that Austria

## INTRODUCTION TO THE

was more absolutely dependent upon Germany than Germany was upon Austria. The final and decisive word, therefore, as, for instance, in the acceptance or refusal of a Conference, must rest with Berlin and not with Vienna. In any case, if German counsels of moderation were likely to be resented by Austria, still more would British counsels have met with rebuff. Nevertheless, there appears to be a genuine opinion in Germany that there was in Austria a headstrong militant element ; that for one reason or another the German Government had difficulty in exercising authority over this element ; and that Austria should therefore bear, if not the whole, at any rate a large share of responsibility for the outbreak of war. The memoirs of Conrad von Hötzendorff, so I am told (*Aus Meiner Dienstzeit*), give support to this theory.

This brings us to the consideration of the article in the Treaty of Versailles which extorts the admission that " Germany and her Allies " were solely responsible for the war. The question here to be considered is not whether this article is true, but whether it is not out of place in the text of a Peace Treaty, and whether the effect of it has not been mischievous.

It seems to me to be very unfortunate that this article was put into the Treaty at all. It appears to support the claim for Repara-

tions. But for this purpose it is unnecessary ; for indemnities are usually exacted from the defeated enemy. The obligation to make good by indemnity all or some of the damage done, is one of the risks that every nation has to take when it participates in a war ; and if reparations are based upon war guilt, why should Germany alone pay reparations when the article associates her Allies in responsibility for the war ? The article seems, therefore, to be ill-conceived even if it be intended to support a material claim.

From the moral point of view the article is useless. It is of no moral effect to make individuals or nations sign confessions of guilt by force.

But the effect has not only been negative, it has been positively mischievous. The article has so worked upon German feeling as to hinder impartial and dispassionate examination in Germany of war guilt and the true causes of the war. It has concentrated national opinion in Germany upon efforts to throw the blame for the war upon other nations ; it has even led to passionate assertions that Germany alone of all those engaged in the war had no war guilt.

It would no doubt have been too much to expect that Germans should take as stern a view of Prussian militarism as we ourselves hold ; but it did not seem impossible or un-



## INTRODUCTION TO THE

reasonable that post-war Germany should admit that Imperial Germany was not faultless, and should claim that Germany should be given a fresh start on the ground that her Government is now in the hands of men who do not belong to the old order, and who should not be judged by a past in which they had no influence. I am told that in post-war German literature there is evidence that moderate Germans find much to criticise in the pre-war policy of Imperial Germany. This is an attitude of mind that makes for agreement and future peace ; it is one that we should wish to help. The war-guilt article in the Peace Treaty hinders this moderate tendency from developing and becoming the national attitude of the German Government and people.

It provokes and intensifies expression in Germany of feelings that make other nations doubt whether the German national view about war and militarism has really changed, and it is this doubt that in the eyes of moderate and conciliatory opinion in neighbouring countries still throws a shadow on the future.

Such is the harm that has been done by putting a war-guilt article into a Treaty that should have been concerned only with defining the conditions of present peace, and providing for future security against war. It is not easy to undo a blunder of this sort. There are genuine objections to

cancelling the article. This cannot be done without opening the door to alterations of the Treaty of Versailles. Some day this door may be opened by general consent, but the time has not yet come for making formal alterations in the text of the Treaty, though statesmanship should see that stipulations which are proved to be impracticable are relaxed or modified in practice.

There are other obstacles to removing the article now that it is in the Treaty. To remove it would certainly be used by German partisans as admitting, or at least implying Germany's innocence. To this none of us would agree. If there be over-statement in the article as it now stands, it is less far from the truth than it would be to say that Germany and her Allies had no responsibility for the war at all.

Further, if the Allies agreed to strike out the article, their act would be construed as evidence that they themselves feel some consciousness of war guilt, an admission they would all resent as untrue, particularly Belgium the innocent victim violated by the German advance, and France, whose government by its every act and especially by the restraint it imposed upon its forces on the very eve of war, showed its desire to keep the peace, while we strove to avert war and found our suggestions blocked at Berlin and Vienna.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE

Nevertheless, even when a blunder cannot be undone, it may be well to say that it had better not have been done ; the mere statement of such an opinion about it may do something to moderate its consequences.

It is a great calamity that in the Peace Treaty there should ever have been anything to stimulate propaganda about war guilt. I do not believe that we have anything to fear from the effect of such propaganda upon anyone who has the true facts and not only a prejudiced selection and distorted version before him ; but all propaganda is based upon a national view of the war. There is another aspect of the great war, which it is more wholesome and profitable to bear in mind. This is the effect the war has had, not upon the reputation of this or that nation, but upon the prestige of Western civilisation as a whole.

In the previous 150 years Western civilisation had greatly impressed the East. The West had by scientific knowledge acquired a control over the forces of nature that was new to the East. Steam and electricity had been harnessed and made to serve human needs and uses. Mechanical skill combined with science had given the West armies and navies which were to the East dominating and irresistible. Japan alone of the Far-Eastern Powers had copied the West and stood on equal terms ; the other Eastern

nations deferred to Western strength. But it was not physical force alone that had gained for the West ascendancy in the East. We had given it to be understood that our efficiency and strength had a moral as well as a physical basis ; that the West had its power by virtue of a more enlightened religious and ethical system. The East was not convinced, but it was impressed. It deferred to European ascendancy.

Then came 1914, and for four years the continent of Europe presented a spectacle of carnage and passion on a scale that had never been known in history. Europe, the prime seat of Western civilisation, presented an extreme example of everything that we had told the East was most abhorrent to the Christian religion and Western ethics. Even the United States, the greatest and most recent development of Western civilisation, though so remote from the scene of conflict, was involved. In the eyes of the East not only was the physical power of Europe weakened by war and financial exhaustion, but the moral basis of Western ascendancy was shattered. The consequences have been apparent since 1918 in Egypt, in Persia, in India, and most notably in China. In the view of the East, war guilt rests upon Western civilisation as a whole. It is possible to understand how this may be the view of the

## INTRODUCTION TO PEOPLE'S EDITION

East, but it does not follow that we should therefore accept it as true.

The fact that the war took place is not a condemnation of our religious and ethical standards ; it is but proof that these standards were not sufficiently assimilated. May not Western civilisation be drawn together to learn this as one of the lessons of the war ? The greatness of the learning may be in proportion to the awfulness of the experience. We may build up a system which in its national self-control, its international justice and its consequent security may be something stronger and more worthy of respect, even of admiration, than the world has yet seen or than the East has yet imagined. It is well, however, that we should first admit to ourselves that our prestige in the East has been lost, and that it is only by international achievement of the kind here advocated that it may in time be regained. The sense of moral loss, such as Europe has suffered, is profoundly depressing, but even this may become stimulating when we see the way by which prestige may be recovered. More encouraging still is the hope that our Western civilisation may yet attain more nearly than ever before to the standard of international ethics, which we have long professed and in which we believe. The best antidote to depression is renewed aspiration.

*September 1928.*

# CONTENTS OF THE COMPLETE WORK

## CONTENTS OF VOLUME ONE

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	23

### CHAPTER I

#### FIRST DAYS IN OFFICE

The 1892 Election—Mr. Gladstone's Last Government— Under-Secretary to Lord Rosebery—The Work of the Under-Secretary—Continuity of Policy—Great Britain and the Triple Alliance—Principles of British Foreign Policy—The Balance of Power . . . . .	43
--	----

### CHAPTER II

#### FRICTION WITH GERMANY AND FRANCE

An Incident at Cairo—The Rough Side of German Friend- ship—French Suspicions—A Siamese Crisis—A Timely Apology—Trouble in West Africa—The "Grey Declaration" and its Origin—Cabinet Objections— Great Britain and Japan—The Beginning of Friend- ship . . . . .	53
--	----

### CHAPTER III

#### FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Training in Office—Life in London—Town Life and Country Life—The Fishing Cottage and its Uses—An Early Flitting—Rest and Recreation—True Luxury— A Depressing Contrast—Methods of Work and Public Speaking—Leaving the Foreign Office—an Unful- filled Intention . . . . .	75
---	----



# CONTENTS OF THE COMPLETE WORK

## CONTENTS OF VOLUME ONE

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	23

### CHAPTER I

#### FIRST DAYS IN OFFICE

The 1892 Election—Mr. Gladstone's Last Government—Under-Secretary to Lord Rosebery—The Work of the Under-Secretary—Continuity of Policy—Great Britain and the Triple Alliance—Principles of British Foreign Policy—The Balance of Power . . . . .	43
---	----

### CHAPTER II

#### FRICTION WITH GERMANY AND FRANCE

An Incident at Cairo—The Rough Side of German Friendship—French Suspicions—A Siamese Crisis—A Timely Apology—Trouble in West Africa—The "Grey Declaration" and its Origin—Cabinet Objections—Great Britain and Japan—The Beginning of Friendship . . . . .	53
--	----

### CHAPTER III

#### FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Training in Office—Life in London—Town Life and Country Life—The Fishing Cottage and its Uses—An Early Flitting—Rest and Recreation—True Luxury—A Depressing Contrast—Methods of Work and Public Speaking—Leaving the Foreign Office—an Unfulfilled Intention . . . . .	75
---	----



# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER IV

### OUT OF OFFICE

PAGE

Two Tendencies of these Years—The Strain with France—Increasing Difficulties with Germany—A New Situation in the Far East—The Russians at Port Arthur—Chamberlain's "Long Spoon" Speech—The Fashoda Incident—Lieut. Marchand's Gallantry—Chamberlain's Overture to Germany—A German Opportunity and its Rejection—A Secret Agreement—The South African War—Continental Hostility—Beginning of the German Big Fleet—The Anglo-Japanese Alliance—The Anglo-French Agreement—Reasons for welcoming it—German Suspicions—Lord Rosebery's View—The Dogger Bank Incident—The Hard Case of Russia—The Pleasures of Opposition—Railway Work—The Chairmanship of the North-Eastern Railway .	86
---	----

## CHAPTER V

### BACK TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE

Balfour's Resignation—Campbell-Bannerman's Government—Difficulties in joining it—An Interview with the Prime Minister—Reasons for coming in—Back to the Foreign Office—The Importance of Free Trade—Campbell-Bannerman's Characteristics—The Qualities of a Good Colleague . . . . .	119
--	-----

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FIRST CRISIS (ALGECIRAS) AND THE MILITARY CONVERSATIONS

The Algeciras Conference—French Apprehensions—Testing the Anglo-French Agreement—A Question for the New Government—The Impossibility of answering it—Interviews with M. Cambon—Military Conversations and their Limitations—An Interview with Metternich—Campbell-Bannerman's View—Ought there to have been a Cabinet?—Preparations and Precautions—Armaments and War—A Later Transaction—The Grey-Cambon Letters of 1912—Endorsement by the Cabinet . . . . .	129
--	-----

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ATMOSPHERE OF SUSPICION

	PAGE
Death of Lady Grey—The Algeciras Conference—British Diplomatic Obligations—Mistrust in France—The Testing Case of Casablanca—German Operations in Paris—And at St. Petersburg—Reassuring France—The Strengthening of the Entente—A Letter to Campbell-Bannerman—The German Place in the Sun	172

## CHAPTER VIII

### AKABA AND DENSHAWAI

The Sultan and the Sinai Peninsula—His Claim to the Gulf of Akaba—Inviting an Ultimatum—Cromer and the Oriental Mind—The Disturbance of "Beech Sunday"—The Situation in Constantinople—Predominance of German Influence and how obtained—A Cynical Policy—The Denshawai Incident—A Difficult Decision—Lord Cromer's Opinion—Life in London and the Country	204
--	-----

## CHAPTER IX

### GERMANY AND THE NORTH SEA

North Sea and Baltic—Negotiating with Germany—French Apprehensions—Lord Ripon's Opinion—Royal Visits—Embarrassments and Suspicions—Self-poisoning in Germany	230
--	-----

## CHAPTER X

### PERSIA AND RUSSIA

The Necessity of an Understanding with Russia—The Persian Danger-point—"Vive la Douma!"—Benckendorff's Question—An Unfavourable Atmosphere—Sowing Mischief—Gains and Losses of the Persian Agreement—Letters to Nicolson—A Train of Minor Troubles—Dinner to Isvolsky	243
---	-----

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SECOND CRISIS (BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA)

	PAGE
Russia, Austria, and Balkan Policy—The Young Turk Revolution—An Austrian Announcement—The British Attitude—The Opening of the Straits—A Russian Demand—Isvolsky's Explanations at Cowes—Serbian Demand for Compensation—A Serious Situation—Russian Support and its Withdrawal—Consternation in Russia—A Charge refuted—An Ominous Parallel—The Question of the Congo—Humanitarianism and Politics—Cabinet Differences—The Eight Dreadnoughts . . . . .	270

## CONTENTS OF VOLUME TWO

### CHAPTER XII

#### KING EDWARD AND FOREIGN POLICY

The King's Visits Abroad—Unfounded Suspicions—The Supposed "Encircling Policy"—The King's Illness and Death—An Estimate of his Character—Legend and Fact—Intangible Qualities—His Popularity a National Asset—The Value of the Monarchy as a British Institution—King George's Accession . . . .	9
--	---

### CHAPTER XIII

#### THE THIRD CRISIS (AGADIR)

Death of George Grey—Trouble in Morocco—The French March to Fez—The German Retort—The <i>Panther</i> at Agadir—The British Attitude—The Silence of Berlin—Lloyd George's Speech—German Protests—German and French Bargaining—British Efforts for Peace—Some Moments of Relief—A Theory of German Action—German Policy reviewed—Some German Ambassadors . . . . .	31
--	----

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE FOURTH CRISIS (THE BALKAN WAR)

	PAGE
Haldane's Visit to Berlin—Advantages and Drawbacks— An Unacceptable Formula—Continuance of Naval Rivalry—The Attack upon Turkey—Victory of the Balkan Allies—Bulgaria dissatisfied—Second Balkan War—Defeat of Bulgaria—Treaty of Bucharest—Its Consequences—Complications between the Powers— The Ambassadors' Conference—Questions at Issue —Albania, Scutari, and the Ægean Islands—Serbian Claims and Austrian Opposition—The Importance of Djakova—A Peaceful Settlement—Cambon, Bencken- dorff, and Lichnowsky—A Neglected Precedent .	73

## CHAPTER XV

## THE LAST DAYS OF PEACE

King George's Visit to Paris—A Reminiscence of the Review—A Request from the French—Naval Con- versations with Russia—Reasons for Consenting—The French Motive and the Russian—Questions in Parlia- ment and the Answer—Explanatory Despatches— Sazonof's Visit to Balmoral—Bethmann-Hollweg's Allegation and the Facts—An Unwarranted Sugges- tion—The European Situation in June 1914—Failure of Proposals to abate Armaments—Germany and the "Naval Holiday"—An Apparently Improving Situation—A Conversation with Lichnowsky—Opinion in France, Germany, and Russia . . . . .	III
--	-----

## CHAPTER XVI

## THE FINAL CRISIS

The Murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand—Sym- pathy with Austria—An Unproved Assumption— The Ultimatum to Serbia—Serbian Submission and Austrian Ruthlessness—The Week before the War— Four Guiding Thoughts—The Proposal of a Confer- ence—The German Veto—Bethmann-Hollweg and
---

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
the German Military Party—The German Bid for British Neutrality—A Dishonouring Proposal—The Inevitable Answer—An Enquiry about Belgium—Russian Mobilization—Difference between Russian and German Mobilization—The Position of Germany and Austria—How it seemed at the Time—Opinion in the Cabinet and the Country—The Anti-War Party—Interviews with Cambon . . . . .	152

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE COMING OF WAR

A Change in the Point of View—A Question of Naval Obligations—Examination of the Belgian Issue—Lord Clarendon's Definition of British Obligations—The Distinction between Belgium and Luxembourg—Mr. Gladstone's View—The Movement towards Cabinet Unity—The Speech of August 3—Lichnowsky's Last Questions—At War . . . . .	198
--	-----

## CHAPTER XVIII

### SOME REFLECTIONS

The Immensity of the War—The "Lamps going out"—The Economic Disaster—Opinion in France, Russia, and Germany—What the German Emperor wanted—The Helplessness of German Civilians—The Deciding Power in Germany—Calculations that Miscarried—The German Motive—Offensive or Defensive?—The Attitude of Austria—Qualifications of the Original Judgment—Could Great Britain have stood aside?—The Probable Result, if she had—The Conditional Obligation to France—Impossibility of an Absolute Pledge—A Summary of Causes and Events . . . . .	222
--	-----

## CHAPTER XIX

### COULD WAR HAVE BEEN PREVENTED?

Difficulty of Dealing with Germany—Absence of Good-will—Persistence of Naval Competition—Imputation	
---	--

of Hidden Motives—The Atmosphere of Militarism— The Vicious Circle of Armaments—Creating Fear— If Great Britain had adopted Conscription—A Certain Result—A Personal Matter—Failing Eyesight . . .	259
---	-----

## CHAPTER XX

## SOME QUESTIONS OF STRATEGY

Churchill and the Fleet—Readiness of the Fleet—Decision not to Demobilize—The Expeditionary Force—Two Questions—Appointment of Kitchener as Secretary for War—Advantages and Drawbacks—Kitchener's Intuitions—An Inspirer of Public Confidence— Mistakes in Strategy—Side-shows—The Dardanelles —The Antwerp Expedition—The Help of the Dominions . . . . .	279
--	-----

## CONTENTS OF VOLUME THREE

## CHAPTER XXI

## AMERICA AND THE WAR

British Relations with the United States—Affinities and Estrangements—Anti-British Elements in America— Recent Ambassadors—Whitelaw Reid and Bryce— Roosevelt's Visit to England in 1910—His Speech about Egypt—A Walk with him in the New Forest— His Knowledge—Woodrow Wilson and the Panama Tolls—Walter Page—Conversations about Mexico— Villa and Huerta—Page's View of the War—His Support and Encouragement . . . . .	II
--	----

## CHAPTER XXII

AMERICA AND THE WAR (*continued*)

The Japanese Alliance and American Interests—Questions of Contraband—The Declaration of London—The
---

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
Blockade of Germany—Delicate and Uncertain Ground—The List of Contraband—Reasons for not Including Cotton—Difficulties about Copper—The Objection to Orders in Council—The Case of the <i>Dacia</i> —Russia and Sweden—The Omission of Cotton Justified—Opinion in the United States—A Fair Field for Diplomacy—German Propaganda—American Visits to Europe . . . . .	32

## CHAPTER XXIII

### NEGOTIATIONS WITH COLONEL HOUSE

Colonel House, the Friend and Confidant of Wilson—Informal Conversations—House's Great Qualities—His View of the War—Stalemate and what next?—The Memorandum of 1916—What President Wilson was prepared to do—Communication to the French—A Projected Mission to Petrograd—Provisions for Absence—A Memorandum for the Cabinet—What might have been . . . . .	58
---	----

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A CORRESPONDENCE WITH ROOSEVELT

A Tribute to Roosevelt's Courage—His Answer—The Panama Canal Tolls—The Abyss of War—If Roosevelt had been President—Speaking out—Three Objects of the War—America and Contraband—Roosevelt's Advice—A pro-German Senator and his Opinions . . . . .	77
---	----

## CHAPTER XXV

### ALLIED DIPLOMACY IN WAR

A Tangled Skein—Impossibility of Consistent Policy—Three Partners and a Fourth—The Deciding Factors	
---	--

Military—Mistakes Fatal and Otherwise—Possible Issues to the War—Inter-Allied Agreement—Objects of Allied Diplomacy—The Neutral States—Four Categories—Different Methods—The Case of Turkey—A Twofold Objective—The Complication of the Battleships—Efforts to Gain Time—A Tribute to Louis Mallet—The Status of Egypt during the War .	105
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXVI

### ALLIED DIPLOMACY IN WAR (*continued*)

Greece and Venizelos—A Proposed Balkan Confederation—The Greek Offer to Join the Allies in 1914—Reasons for Declining It—Complications with Russia—An Attractive Theory—Its Refutation—A Demand from Russia—The Conservative Party in Council—The Russian Secret Treaty—Further Efforts with Bulgaria—More Despatches . . . . .	131
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXVII

### ALLIED DIPLOMACY IN WAR (*continued*)

The Balkans in 1915—The Menace of Bulgaria—Impossibility of appeasing her—The Intractability of Serbia—German Counter-offers—Some Typical Despatches—The Adherence of Italy—Russian Objections—French and British Representations—Negotiations with Roumania—Further Despatches—An Ugly Feeling in Russia—Dark Days—Making the Best of Things . . . . .	163
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### ALLIED DIPLOMACY IN WAR (*continued*)

Greek Opinion in 1915—The Landing at Salonica—Venizelos's Attitude—An Equivocal Position—Venizelos's Resignation—Greece and Serbia—Refusal to help Serbia—Destruction of the Serbian Army—	
--	--



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
Plans for its Recuperation—A Reflection after the Event—The Entry of Portugal—Our Japanese Ally .	191

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE END OF OFFICE

More Secret Treaties—A Promise to the Arabs—Spheres in Asia Minor—An Intimation from Russia—A British Stipulation—More Greek Complications—Resignation of the Asquith Government—Some Personal Appreciations—A Letter from Lichnowsky—Paul Cambon—"Il y a aussi la Justice"—The Exclusion of Haldane, a Letter to the Prime Minister—Attitude of Bonar Law—Kitchener's Great Contribution—Asquith as Prime Minister—His Loyalty and Steadiness—Lloyd George—His Untiring Activity—Runciman at the Board of Trade—Some Humorous Reminiscences—Peerage and Last Days in Office—A Mission to the United States . . . . .	210
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE FOREIGN OFFICE

The Foreign Secretary's Routine—A Typical Day's Work—The "Boxes"—At the Office and Afterwards—Debates in Parliament and Afterwards—The Qualifications of a Foreign Secretary—Recording Conversations—A Current Delusion—Informing the Cabinet—Public Men and Office—The Loss of Freedom—A Quotation from Bacon . . . . .	239
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXXI

### CONCLUSION

A Retrospect—1895 and 1905—The Changes in Ten Years—The Friendship with France—German Testing Operations—The Choice for Great Britain—A Great Danger and the Escape from it—The Conditions of Safety—Some Blind Alleys for Thought—Open and	
---	--

# CONTENTS

PAGE

Secret Diplomacy—The Question of War-guilt— Armaments and War—The Sense of Fear—British and German Shipbuilding—German Theories—British Motives—A Disastrous Mistake—The Responsibility of the Allies—The Change in the Nature of War— Learn or Perish—The Need of a Concerted Effort .	255
--	-----

## APPENDIX A

SIR GEORGE GREY (GRANDFATHER OF VISCOUNT GREY) . . . . .	276
---	-----

## APPENDIX B

SPEECH BY SIR EDWARD GREY ON THE ANGLO- FRENCH AGREEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, JUNE 1, 1904 . . . . .	278
--	-----

## APPENDIX C

MEMORANDUM OF INTERVIEW BETWEEN SIR EDWARD GREY AND M. CLEMENCEAU, APRIL 28, 1908 . . . . .	289
---	-----

## APPENDIX D

SPEECH BY SIR EDWARD GREY IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON AUGUST 3, 1914 . . . . .	296
--	-----

## APPENDIX E

ADDRESS BY VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON AT THE UNVEILING OF THE TABLET TO WALTER HINCH PAGE IN THE CHAPTER- HOUSE, WESTMINSTER ABBEY, JULY 3, 1923	320
--	-----

# CONTENTS

## APPENDIX F

THE "SUGGESTIONS" OF AUGUST 1, 1914 . . .	PAGE 323
---	-------------

## APPENDIX G

THE ALLEGED "FAKING" OF DOCUMENTS . . .	326
---	-----

INDEX . . . . .	331
-----------------	-----

## INTRODUCTION

It is of vital importance to the world that there should be a true account of the events that led up to the Great War: without this there can be no right understanding of the causes of the war; and without such understanding nations will not perceive how to avoid the recurrence of another and greater disaster. It has therefore seemed a duty for one who had been long and intimately concerned in pre-war diplomacy to give his narrative of events, his interpretation of them, and the impression produced by them on his own mind. I have therefore had no doubt that this book ought to be written, and the decision to write it needs no excuse or apology.

Whether it should be published now, or reserved for a later time, is open to question.

War has stirred passion, enlisted sympathies, and aroused hatreds; many of the war generation have formed opinions that nothing will modify, and are dominated by predilections or prejudices that have become an inseparable part of their lives. With such people mental digestion ceases to be able to assimilate anything except what nourishes convictions already formed; all else is re-

CONTENTS

APPENDIX F

	PAGE
THE " SUGGESTIONS " OF AUGUST 1, 1914 . .	323

APPENDIX G

THE ALLEGED " FAKING " OF DOCUMENTS .	326
INDEX . . . . .	331

## INTRODUCTION

It is of vital importance to the world that there should be a true account of the events that led up to the Great War: without this there can be no right understanding of the causes of the war; and without such understanding nations will not perceive how to avoid the recurrence of another and greater disaster. It has therefore seemed a duty for one who had been long and intimately concerned in pre-war diplomacy to give his narrative of events, his interpretation of them, and the impression produced by them on his own mind. I have therefore had no doubt that this book ought to be written, and the decision to write it needs no excuse or apology.

Whether it should be published now, or reserved for a later time, is open to question.

War has stirred passion, enlisted sympathies, and aroused hatreds; many of the war generation have formed opinions that nothing will modify, and are dominated by predilections or prejudices that have become an inseparable part of their lives. With such people mental digestion ceases to be able to assimilate anything except what nourishes convictions already formed; all else is re-

## INTRODUCTION

jected or resented; and new material or reflections about the war are searched, not for the truth, but for fuel to feed the flame of preconceived opinion. Especially is this likely to be the case in the country into whose soul the iron of adversity and defeat has most deeply entered; and not till a new generation rules will books about the war be read, not to be refuted or acclaimed, but to be understood.

There is also another consideration that makes against immediate publication. When a writer has taken a prominent part in controversial affairs the reception of all that he says about the past is apt to be coloured by the desire of readers to encourage or to depress the part that he may yet take in present or future controversies. A book of this character, therefore, fails less in its influence if published after the life of the writer, when praise or censure can have no effect upon him.

On the other hand, there is a new generation now growing up whose opinions about the war are yet to be formed; and there are many even of the war generation who are dispassionately and increasingly anxious to discover truth. They ought to have the fullest material at their disposal now, and it is mainly for these that this book is written.

It must not, however, be supposed, because the writer was for so many years, and those

the most critical, at the centre of affairs that his account is necessarily authoritative and complete. It is precisely the man at the centre who is often unable to see the wood for the trees. In addition to this it must be remembered that the scope of each individual mind is fragmentary. Try as he may, each one of us can grasp but one aspect of the truth; and this is all that he can convey to others. Probably some historian of the future, more remote than we are from the actual events, will reach an eminence of view about the war to which we cannot yet attain.

Two temptations that impair the value of their work inevitably beset public men who write memoirs. One is a tendency to reconstruct the past to suit the present views and feelings of the writer; the other is a natural desire to set his own part in affairs in a pleasing light. It is probably not given to any human being to be superior to these tendencies; even the effort to avoid them, on one side, may land him in error on another. Someone has said that there may be as much vanity in wearing fustian as smart clothes or uniform, and the writer who determines not to vaunt his own part in affairs may easily fall into the vanity of self-depreciation.

I have, however, made an attempt to avoid these pitfalls, and to describe events as they actually happened, and my own part in them



## INTRODUCTION

jected or resented ; and new material or reflections about the war are searched, not for the truth, but for fuel to feed the flame of preconceived opinion. Especially is this likely to be the case in the country into whose soul the iron of adversity and defeat has most deeply entered ; and not till a new generation rules will books about the war be read, not to be refuted or acclaimed, but to be understood.

There is also another consideration that makes against immediate publication. When a writer has taken a prominent part in controversial affairs the reception of all that he says about the past is apt to be coloured by the desire of readers to encourage or to depress the part that he may yet take in present or future controversies. A book of this character, therefore, fails less in its influence if published after the life of the writer, when praise or censure can have no effect upon him.

On the other hand, there is a new generation now growing up whose opinions about the war are yet to be formed ; and there are many even of the war generation who are dispassionately and increasingly anxious to discover truth. They ought to have the fullest material at their disposal now, and it is mainly for these that this book is written.

It must not, however, be supposed, because the writer was for so many years, and those

the most critical, at the centre of affairs that his account is necessarily authoritative and complete. It is precisely the man at the centre who is often unable to see the wood for the trees. In addition to this it must be remembered that the scope of each individual mind is fragmentary. Try as he may, each one of us can grasp but one aspect of the truth; and this is all that he can convey to others. Probably some historian of the future, more remote than we are from the actual events, will reach an eminence of view about the war to which we cannot yet attain.

Two temptations that impair the value of their work inevitably beset public men who write memoirs. One is a tendency to reconstruct the past to suit the present views and feelings of the writer; the other is a natural desire to set his own part in affairs in a pleasing light. It is probably not given to any human being to be superior to these tendencies; even the effort to avoid them, on one side, may land him in error on another. Someone has said that there may be as much vanity in wearing fustian as smart clothes or uniform, and the writer who determines not to vaunt his own part in affairs may easily fall into the vanity of self-depreciation.

I have, however, made an attempt to avoid these pitfalls, and to describe events as they actually happened, and my own part in them

## INTRODUCTION

jected or resented; and new material or reflections about the war are searched, not for the truth, but for fuel to feed the flame of preconceived opinion. Especially is this likely to be the case in the country into whose soul the iron of adversity and defeat has most deeply entered; and not till a new generation rules will books about the war be read, not to be refuted or acclaimed, but to be understood.

There is also another consideration that makes against immediate publication. When a writer has taken a prominent part in controversial affairs the reception of all that he says about the past is apt to be coloured by the desire of readers to encourage or to depress the part that he may yet take in present or future controversies. A book of this character, therefore, fails less in its influence if published after the life of the writer, when praise or censure can have no effect upon him.

On the other hand, there is a new generation now growing up whose opinions about the war are yet to be formed; and there are many even of the war generation who are dispassionately and increasingly anxious to discover truth. They ought to have the fullest material at their disposal now, and it is mainly for these that this book is written.

It must not, however, be supposed, because the writer was for so many years, and those

recognized in the promotion of Sir Eyre Crowe<sup>1</sup> to be head of the Foreign Office. To this I may add another pleasure : that of having seen Sir Eric Drummond, who had been closely associated with me during the war, selected, with the approval of high foreign opinion as well as of his own chiefs, to be Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

One other name must be specially mentioned : that of Sir William Tyrrell, who was for many years my chief Private Secretary. The public has little or no means of knowing how much it owes in public service to special gifts or qualities in individual civil servants in high positions in Departments of State. In each case, where such qualities exist, a man renders service, peculiarly his own, besides taking an able part in the conduct of business in the Department. Tyrrell's power of understanding the point of view of foreigners has been of the greatest value in making the British position both more intelligible and more acceptable to them. For nothing so predisposes men to understand as making them feel that they are understood. I had occasion, in office, to know the great value of Tyrrell's public service ; but the thing that I prize is our friendship, that began in the

<sup>1</sup> Since these words were written the public service of the country has suffered an irreparable loss in the death of Sir Eyre Crowe.

## INTRODUCTION

and my feelings about them as these actually were at the time.

This book naturally presents the British view, or, at least, that portion of it which was, and is, my own ; but in it an endeavour has been made to envisage also the international aspect of the war. Indeed, the main purpose and desire has not been to make vindication or condemnation of any country the final word. That would be a barren and unprofitable end. The endeavour has been made to present the facts in such a way as to discover, or help others to discover and draw, conclusions that may avoid another war of the same scope and character.

There is comparatively little mention of persons with whom the writer worked at the Foreign Office. This is not from lack of gratitude to men like Sir Arthur Nicolson and Sir Charles Hardinge, who were in succession the Under-Secretaries and Heads of the Department while I was Secretary of State, and to many others in the Foreign Office. It would require many pages to make adequate mention of them all, but I do pay an earnest and sincere tribute to their public spirit and able service to the State. It was a privilege as well as a pleasure to work with them.

It has been a great satisfaction, since I left office, to see great knowledge, ability, and unsurpassed devotion to the public service

recognized in the promotion of Sir Eyre Crowe<sup>1</sup> to be head of the Foreign Office. To this I may add another pleasure: that of having seen Sir Eric Drummond, who had been closely associated with me during the war, selected, with the approval of high foreign opinion as well as of his own chiefs, to be Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

One other name must be specially mentioned: that of Sir William Tyrrell, who was for many years my chief Private Secretary. The public has little or no means of knowing how much it owes in public service to special gifts or qualities in individual civil servants in high positions in Departments of State. In each case, where such qualities exist, a man renders service, peculiarly his own, besides taking an able part in the conduct of business in the Department. Tyrrell's power of understanding the point of view of foreigners has been of the greatest value in making the British position both more intelligible and more acceptable to them. For nothing so predisposes men to understand as making them feel that they are understood. I had occasion, in office, to know the great value of Tyrrell's public service; but the thing that I prize is our friendship, that began in the

<sup>1</sup> Since these words were written the public service of the country has suffered an irreparable loss in the death of Sir Eyre Crowe.

## INTRODUCTION

Foreign Office, and has continued uninterrupted and intimate after official ties ceased.

This book has been written under one great disadvantage—the disability of impaired sight. This has made it impossible for me to search through masses of documents and to select for myself. It would not have been fair to ask that anyone in the Foreign Office should be diverted from public work to undertake this heavy task, for the book is entirely personal and unofficial.

I therefore asked Mr. J. A. Spender, a friend of many years, to undertake this for me, and the book has had the great advantage of his collaboration. His long experience as a writer on public affairs and his able impartiality of mind have made his help invaluable. From the masses of material at the Foreign Office he would select the documents that seemed to him to be the most salient and typical and to throw the clearest light on policy. These he would send to me with marked passages or comments, to direct attention to special points. From the selection so made I have chosen the documents to be quoted. I am sure that his trained ability and judgment have selected well, that the documents chosen do give a fair and not a tendencious or distorted impression of policy and transactions at the Foreign

Office. Masses of other documents in the Foreign Office of course there are : many of them would perhaps be deemed of equal importance with those quoted in this book ; but, according to my recollection, and to Mr. Spender's own opinion after much search, there are none that would put British policy in a different light or that would make any new revelation. My grateful thanks are due to the King for gracious permission to have access to documents among His Majesty's papers ; and to Lord Curzon,<sup>1</sup> who, as Secretary of State, gave the permission that I asked for Spender to consult all official records at the Foreign Office belonging to the years when I was there as Under-Secretary or Secretary of State. I am also very grateful to Mr. Gaselee, the librarian at the Foreign Office, and to his Department for the help given to Spender in searching for special documents. All my private papers, with two exceptions, were left at the Foreign Office for safe keeping, and are still there. These were placed by me at Spender's disposal, and from them he has made some selections. What has been said about the fairness of selections from official documents applies

<sup>1</sup> The news of Lord Curzon's death came while these sheets were in the press, and to the expression of gratitude must now be added that of great regret at the close of his brilliant life of public service.



## INTRODUCTION

also to those made from private papers. But it would be very unfair to the Foreign Office to transact important matters through private channels. If the staff of an Office is to serve the State well they must know what is being done, and the record must be accessible to them in official documents. The private papers, therefore, have no State secrets to reveal. The two exceptions mentioned above, which were not with my papers at the Foreign Office, are a private letter from Lichnowsky and the "House" Memorandum and my covering note upon it; both these are printed in the places in this book to which they are appropriate.<sup>1</sup>

All care has been taken to ensure that nothing of real or great importance should be overlooked and that inaccuracies should not creep in; but in a book that extends over so many years and deals with so many complex affairs some mistakes or inaccuracies may occur. Memory may err in some detail, but the main outlines it has traced and the impressions recorded are true.

<sup>1</sup> It may perhaps be convenient to explain to the reader who is unacquainted with diplomatic forms that the practice of the Foreign Secretary is to give his record of a conversation with a Foreign Ambassador the form of a despatch to the British Ambassador in the country concerned. Nearly all the conversations recorded in these volumes are in that form. For details of the practice of the Foreign Secretary in this and other matters see Vol. III. Chapter XXX.

My sight, which still enables me to write, is not equal to the sustained reading of long tracts of manuscript or even of print. Revision and the correction of proofs have therefore been left in the main to better eyes than mine.

What political value the book has must be left to others to determine. It presents my own views, but its object is much more to stimulate thought than to press that these views should be accepted as conclusive. Those of us who grew to maturity in the nineteenth century acquired our sense of values and formed our first opinions in the latter part of the Victorian age. The general point of view in domestic affairs was already changing rapidly before 1914. The war may be regarded as the division between two epochs in foreign affairs as well. We, who were in foremost places in 1904, belonged to one epoch and have lived on into another. We are now confronted by problems that are new to us, our vision may be rendered unsteady by things that seem disquieting or alarming, because they are strange to us. Control of affairs has already passed in part and must soon pass entirely to younger and fresher minds, who may see further and more clearly, because much that preoccupies us with its strangeness will be to them familiar and intelligible. It is not for us to be confident

## INTRODUCTION

that, because we know more of the past, we can therefore see more clearly than they into the future. What we can do is to record for them our experience, and our reflections upon it, in the hope that these may provide some suggestion and impetus to thought that in their fresh minds may be fruitful.

This book is not intended to be a biography, and therefore no account will be given of boyhood, of school or college, or of marriage and home life, except in so far as they had influence upon public life or were affected by it.

In early years public affairs had no interest for me : my recollection is most meagre and trivial.

I remember being asked by my father, at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, on which side I was. My age was then about  $8\frac{1}{4}$  years and I had little feeling in the matter ; but, moved probably by what I had heard of Waterloo, and perhaps also by a liking for a game called " German " as distinct from ordinary dominoes, I replied that I was on the side of the Germans. My father<sup>1</sup> had been in the Rifle Brigade, and had fought in alliance with the French in the

<sup>1</sup> Capt. George Henry Grey (afterwards Lieut.-Col. of Northumberland Militia), Equerry to the Prince of Wales 1859-74. See *Life of Edward VII*, vol. i, p. 155.

Crimea. My answer did not please him ; he reproved me for my preference, and I relapsed into the indifference from which, but for his question, I should never have emerged.

It must have been a few months later that I was called out on to the balcony at Fallodon on a winter evening to see a display of Aurora Borealis. A great part of the sky was not only irradiated with light, but suffused with pink. The recollection of the apparition has always been very positive and distinct to me ; and I have never, in after-years, seen any display of Aurora Borealis that approached this. It may be, therefore, that imagination has enhanced the glory and beauty of it, but it remains in memory as a wonderful vision. I remember my grandfather saying, as we stood on the balcony, that if Paris had not been so distant we might have thought that the Prussians were burning it and that this was causing the illumination of the sky.

In the late summer of 1873 I was taken on a visit to the Highlands. We were returning by train from Inverness. My grandfather and I were alone in the compartment. At one of the stations where the train stopped (Kingussie, probably) my grandfather looked out of the window and I heard a greeting from someone on the platform. A gentleman, who was a stranger to me, was welcomed.

## INTRODUCTION

into the compartment, and thence to Perth an incessant and animated conversation went on, of which I understood nothing and took no heed. At Perth the stranger parted from us, and when he had gone my grandfather told me it was Mr. Gladstone. The information meant nothing to me at the time, but years afterwards my grandfather asked me if I remembered the occasion, and told me what the subject of the talk had been. It was the technical but very embarrassing difficulty in which Mr. Gladstone, then Prime Minister, was placed by having taken a second office without vacating his seat and being re-elected. My grandfather, Sir George Grey,<sup>1</sup> though no longer in office, had been a colleague of Gladstone's in previous Cabinets; he had had very great experience as Home Secretary, and had been forty years in the House of Commons, of which he was still a member. He was an authority on parliamentary procedure, and no doubt Gladstone welcomed the opportunity of discussing this particular point with him.

<sup>1</sup> Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in Lord Melbourne's second Government (1841); Home Secretary in Lord John Russell's first Government, 1846-52; Colonial Secretary in Lord Aberdeen's Government, 1854-5; Home Secretary in Lord Palmerston's first Government, 1855-8; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and subsequently Home Secretary in Lord Palmerston's second Government, 1859-66.

At the end of 1874 my father died. After his marriage he had still continued to live at Fallodon with his parents, and he and my mother had kept house there when my grandparents were absent for the Sessions of Parliament. After his death my mother and all of us remained at Fallodon, my grandfather now taking a father's place with his grandchildren.<sup>1</sup>

I do not remember taking any interest in public events till the news of the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish in Dublin in 1882. I was then an undergraduate at Balliol, and I joined in the clamour for martial law. This I repeated to my grandfather, who met it with the critical comment, "Martial law is the suspension of all law."

A few months later my grandfather died, and I inherited the house and property at Fallodon. In 1884, after a long spell of what is generally called idleness, but which was in my case very active and strenuous pursuit of pleasure in the form of sport and

<sup>1</sup> There were seven of us, four boys and three girls. A *Memoir of Sir George Grey*, written by Dr. Creighton (Bishop of London) was published in 1901 by Longmans, Green & Co. It gives an account, written with intimate knowledge, of a singularly lovable as well as upright character. Whoever reads it will get some impression of how much happiness and benefit we owed to our grandfather's affection and influence. See Appendix A, Vol. III, p. 276.

## INTRODUCTION

games, interest in all manner of serious things came suddenly. I began to read good literature, poetry excited me to enthusiasm, and I read everything serious, however prolix, with interest. I remember being absorbed in the *Life of George Eliot*, when it appeared. The same rush of interest applied itself to public affairs. I read political leading articles and magazines, but at the very outset of this awakening a thing happened that decided the course of life for me.

In 1884 Gladstone's Government proposed an extension of the franchise to the counties on similar terms to those on which a Conservative Government had given it to the boroughs in 1867. The House of Lords rejected the proposal; there was great indignation in the counties, and a franchise demonstration was arranged at Alnwick, the county town near Falldon.

Nothing was known of my politics, but my family name was notably associated with the Reform Bill of 1832; my grandfather had sat from 1848 to 1852 for the district, and had in fact been the last Liberal representative for it. I was asked to take the chair at the demonstration at Alnwick. It seemed to me very unfair that men in the counties generally, and in Northumberland especially, should not have the franchise that had been given to the boroughs so many years before.

I was country-bred, and a sense of fair play and strong local feeling enlisted all my sympathies with the demonstration. The invitation was accepted without hesitation; my speech was short and commonplace enough; it was my first attempt at a public speech or at any speech on politics, but I got through it, after much previous anxiety, more easily than I expected. The extension of the franchise was at this moment the dividing line between parties, and thus was decided the party to which I was to belong.

I was chosen as Liberal candidate for the new constituency of the Berwick-on-Tweed Division of Northumberland, which included Alnwick and all the neighbourhood of my home. The new electors, who had long resented their exclusion from the franchise to which they were now admitted, went to the poll in large numbers for the party that had given them the vote. I was thus elected to Parliament in November 1885.

In a very short time there came another turning-point. From 1880 to 1885 Gladstone's Government had been driven to coercive measures to govern Ireland. They had been in bitter conflict with the Irish Home Rule members led by Parnell, whom Gladstone had denounced as marching through rapine to the dismemberment of the Empire. This had not deterred the Conservative



Government that succeeded on Gladstone's resignation in the summer of 1885 from entering into friendly relations with Parnell, with whom Lord Carnarvon, a member of the Conservative Cabinet and Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, was known to have had an interview. It was clear that the Conservative Government had not gone so far as to promise a separate Parliament in Dublin, but they had spoken of the advantage of large Local Authorities. Home Rule was in the air. The Conservative Party avowedly received the Irish vote at the General Election held in the autumn of 1885. After that election the number of Irish Home Rule members was more than doubled; there were now eighty-five of them.

Early in 1886 it was known that Gladstone would advocate Home Rule. The opinion that he was right in the conclusion that the old system of governing Ireland had broken down, is now confirmed by after-events. But the curve was a very sharp one, and a very important section of Liberals who had supported him in opposing Irish Home Rulers, could not adjust their course to it. There was a split in the party. For me there was no curve, for I was new to public life and was only making a start. It was open to me, without inconsistency, to be either a Home Ruler or a Unionist.

I have no doubt, taking force of character, energy, and intellectual power combined, that Gladstone was the greatest man in whose presence I have ever been. I had, however, not sufficient experience for this feeling to be as strong on my entrance to public life as it became afterwards and remains now, and Gladstone's new departure in 1886 was not alone decisive for me.

There is, however, a difficulty that besets, and probably always has and will beset, men of independent mind in public life. It is that great men are difficult to follow consistently, while lesser men have not the capacity to lead. Great minds do not travel for long on the average line of thought; the man of average mind, therefore, finds great men difficult to follow.

That a man of Mr. Gladstone's importance should advocate Home Rule was a fact so arresting as to make me feel the necessity for thought: the suddenness of the change puzzled and made me doubt.

Then I came across the articles written by John Morley in the *Pall Mall Gazette* during the Irish coercion period of Gladstone's Government. When read in sequence they seemed irresistible in their argument that coercion was not, under modern conditions, possible as a permanent system of governing Ireland. The only alternative was Home

## INTRODUCTION

Rule. I was intellectually convinced : Morley seemed to be clear and consistent in his thought about Ireland.

Parliament met early in 1886 ; the Salisbury Government was turned out ; Gladstone formed a Liberal Government with the avowed purpose of producing a Home Rule Bill. Morley was made Irish Secretary ; on taking office he had to seek re-election in his constituency of Newcastle-on-Tyne. There was a contest ; as member for a neighbouring constituency I was asked to help in it and did so whole-heartedly. Henceforward I was a Liberal Home Ruler.

Of the first six years spent in the House of Commons little need be said. I failed to deliver a maiden speech on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill in 1886. The press of members desiring to speak was so great, and there were so many new members with maiden speeches to make, that I was not called on, though for two days I rose more than once each day. At last I heard that the Speaker had intended to call me, but that the Government Whips had put in a strong plea for a member of the party senior to me, who had not yet succeeded in getting his chance. Probably this was fortunate : the occasion was too big for what I had to say or for my force of delivery as it was then ; I was left with a feeling of relief at having been spared

an ordeal, and not at all of disappointment at having missed an opportunity.

But the ordeal was one that had to be faced some time, and the next year I summoned courage to make another attempt, and succeeded in delivering a speech on the Irish question. The success of it did not approach that of Asquith's maiden speech in the same year, of which it was justly said that the House listened to it as to the speech of a leader. Nevertheless, mine had a modest success, and was immediately followed by an invitation to my wife and myself to dine with Sir William and Lady Harcourt.

In 1888 came the first sign of independence. The Conservative Government were promoting Irish Land Purchase, while opposing Home Rule. Land Purchase had been part of Gladstone's Home Rule policy of 1886, but the Liberal Party generally was not prepared to support it except as part of Home Rule. Some Unionists held that if the Irish land question could be settled by turning tenants into owners, the political agitation for Home Rule would disappear. I did not share this view, but was prepared to abide by the result of Land Purchase. If it did put an end to political agitation by all means let it do so ; but, if it did not, we should then have the political question free from the complications of the land question. In any case, it would

## INTRODUCTION

be a benefit to Britain and to Ireland to have the land question settled. In this Haldane and I found ourselves acting together, and an association and friendship thus began which endured and strengthened as years went on. We each spoke and voted against our party, but the recognized term "cave" was thought too dignified a word to apply to the independent action of only two very junior members of the party. Our effort was described as a "rabbit-hole." With this passing exception I spoke and voted whole-heartedly with the Liberal Home Rule Party. A sense of the unfairness and inequalities of life stirred me and led me to act with what was then the advanced section of the party, including those of whom John Morley spoke, in a cautionary speech, as young men who dreamt dreams. Thus six years passed during which interest was centred on the domestic side of politics. Then came the General Election of 1892, when I was returned to Parliament for the third time. The next chapter will begin the narrative which it is the object of this book to tell.

# CHAPTER I

## FIRST DAYS IN OFFICE

The 1892 Election—Mr. Gladstone's Last Government—Under-Secretary to Lord Rosebery—The Work of the Under-Secretary—Continuity of Policy—Great Britain and the Triple Alliance—Principles of British Foreign Policy—The Balance of Power.

IN July 1892 the result of the General Election gave to Liberals and Irish Nationalists combined a majority of forty in the House of Commons. The political alliance between Liberals and Irish was complete ; the Unionist Government was displaced on the meeting of the new House of Commons in August, and Mr. Gladstone formed a Liberal Home Rule Cabinet, the Irish standing out of office, but giving assurances of solid and thorough support, for the introduction and passing of a Home Rule Bill were to be the first and main objects of the Government.

Lord Rosebery went to the Foreign Office, entering office, it was said, with some reluctance and not without some representation from outside purely Liberal quarters that his presence at the Foreign Office was essential in the public interest. He selected me as his Parliamentary Under-Secretary.

I had had no special training for Foreign Office work, nor had I till then paid special attention to foreign affairs. But special knowledge is not a necessary qualification in a young man appointed to a Parliamentary Under-Secretaryship. His business is not to be an expert, but to be trained in capacity for public affairs. The theory and practice of parliamentary government is not that of government by experts, but by men of general experience and proved capacity presiding over experts who are the civil servants in our public affairs.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office had, in the official routine, little share in directing policy. He had access at all times to his chief, the Secretary of State ; he could express his views of what was being done by memoranda or orally ; he could resign if he did not agree. He saw all important telegrams and despatches, but they came to him after they had been settled and despatched. His business was to make himself thoroughly acquainted with all that was done in the Office, to get up carefully any particular point on which information was sought by Members of the House of Commons, to make statements on foreign affairs that should be in entire accordance with the policy of the Cabinet, and to defend and explain that policy without giving offence

to foreign countries. It was not for him to take upon himself the responsibility of indiscretions; he had to be discreet without being unnecessarily reserved. It was an admirable and interesting training, particularly when, as sometimes happened, there had been differences of opinion in the Cabinet resulting in a decision that was a compromise. On such occasions the Under-Secretary was informed by his chief of the decision reached and received general instructions from him. He had then to interpret and expound the policy to the House of Commons, sometimes at considerable length, in such a way as to satisfy one party in the Cabinet without saying a word that might seem to the other party to be disloyal to the compromise to which they had agreed. He had to do this without having been present at the Cabinet discussions at which the differences and shades of opinion had been manifested and at which the decision of policy had been reached. The statement had to be made in public, in face of an Opposition alert and on the watch for an opening, and with Cabinet Ministers who were parties to the policy sitting on each side of him. A compromise is generally a dull conclusion of interesting, sometimes painfully interesting, discussions; it is anodyne and sedative, but it is not always the negation of two opposite policies



and the adoption of a middle course between them. It seemed to the Under-Secretary that it sometimes consisted of one section getting its way as to what should be done, while the other section made conditions as to how the policy should be formulated and announced.

There were not, however, differences of opinion in the Cabinets of 1892-5 about grave matters of foreign policy ; the main difference was as to whether British East Africa and Uganda should become definitely British possessions, and whether a railway to Uganda should be made. These questions were under the Foreign Office, but they were questions of Imperial Expansion, not of foreign policy, and later on they were naturally transferred to the Colonial Office. They were made the subject of controversy and attack by the Unionist Opposition, whereas on matters of foreign policy that Opposition gave general support to the Liberal Government, both while Lord Rosebery was at the Foreign Office and when he was Prime Minister. I will, therefore, not dwell further on these matters that seemed so difficult and important at the time, and will come to matters of foreign policy that are the chief subject of this narrative.

Before and during the Election of 1892 Mr. Gladstone kept foreign affairs out of

party politics ; indeed, he expressly said in one speech that he did not find fault with the foreign policy of Lord Salisbury from 1886 to 1892, and thereby ruled it to be not a matter of controversy between parties.

Lord Rosebery, when he took the Foreign Office, informed the Ambassadors of the Triple Alliance that it was his intention to continue Lord Salisbury's policy. One of my first recollections is that of reading the record of the conversations in which this was conveyed to these three Ambassadors, and in which they expressed their cordial satisfaction at the intimation.

The traditional policy which the new Government took up was that of a distinct friendship with the Triple Alliance ; there was no engagement, no promise, no definite agreement ; it was a policy that could be changed at any moment. Great Britain had remained sufficiently detached and free for Mr. Goschen, a member of Lord Salisbury's Cabinet, speaking from the Treasury bench in the House of Commons, to describe our position as one of "splendid isolation." On the other hand, there was something that in practice manifested itself as a working arrangement ; so manifest and well known was it that French newspapers, when particularly provoked by friction with Great Britain, would write wrathfully not of the Triple, but

and the adoption of a middle course between them. It seemed to the Under-Secretary that it sometimes consisted of one section getting its way as to what should be done, while the other section made conditions as to how the policy should be formulated and announced.

There were not, however, differences of opinion in the Cabinets of 1892-5 about grave matters of foreign policy ; the main difference was as to whether British East Africa and Uganda should become definitely British possessions, and whether a railway to Uganda should be made. These questions were under the Foreign Office, but they were questions of Imperial Expansion, not of foreign policy, and later on they were naturally transferred to the Colonial Office. They were made the subject of controversy and attack by the Unionist Opposition, whereas on matters of foreign policy that Opposition gave general support to the Liberal Government, both while Lord Rosebery was at the Foreign Office and when he was Prime Minister. I will, therefore, not dwell further on these matters that seemed so difficult and important at the time, and will come to matters of foreign policy that are the chief subject of this narrative.

Before and during the Election of 1892 Mr. Gladstone kept foreign affairs out of

party politics ; indeed, he expressly said in one speech that he did not find fault with the foreign policy of Lord Salisbury from 1886 to 1892, and thereby ruled it to be not a matter of controversy between parties.

Lord Rosebery, when he took the Foreign Office, informed the Ambassadors of the Triple Alliance that it was his intention to continue Lord Salisbury's policy. One of my first recollections is that of reading the record of the conversations in which this was conveyed to these three Ambassadors, and in which they expressed their cordial satisfaction at the intimation.

The traditional policy which the new Government took up was that of a distinct friendship with the Triple Alliance ; there was no engagement, no promise, no definite agreement ; it was a policy that could be changed at any moment. Great Britain had remained sufficiently detached and free for Mr. Goschen, a member of Lord Salisbury's Cabinet, speaking from the Treasury bench in the House of Commons, to describe our position as one of "splendid isolation." On the other hand, there was something that in practice manifested itself as a working arrangement ; so manifest and well known was it that French newspapers, when particularly provoked by friction with Great Britain, would write wrathfully not of the Triple, but

of the Quadruple Alliance. British Governments in these years sided diplomatically with the Triple Alliance. Those who affirm that England's policy has always been that of the Balance of Power in Europe should consider whether British policy in these years does entirely agree with this theory of it.

I have never, so far as I recollect, used the phrase "Balance of Power." I have often deliberately avoided the use of it, and I have never consciously set it before me as something to be pursued, attained, and preserved. I am not, therefore, qualified to explain or define what it is. I imagine it to mean that when one Power or group of Powers is the strongest "bloc" in Europe, our policy has been, or should be, that of creating, or siding with, some other combination of Powers, in order to make a counterpoise to the strongest Power or Group and so to preserve equilibrium in Europe. Now the Triple Alliance in 1886 and the following years, when Lord Salisbury and Lord Rosebery were Prime Ministers, was indisputably the strongest political combination, the most powerful thing in Europe. Nevertheless, the policy of friendship with it was followed by the British Government even before the Franco-Russian Alliance had come into existence as a counterpoise; and this policy was continued for many years, while the Triple Alliance con-

tinued, in spite of the Franco-Russian Alliance, to be the dominant factor in European diplomacy. During this period, therefore, Great Britain did not attempt to create any counterpoise to the strongest group; on the contrary, the British Government sided with that group. I do not affirm that this, when closely examined, disproves the theory that the tendency of British policy has been to preserve a balance of power; but there is sufficient apparent inconsistency with the theory to make it necessary to examine what may be called the Triple Alliance policy of the British Government from 1886 to the end of the century and to ask why it was followed.

I suppose that in this, as in most investigations of British foreign policy, the true reason is not to be found in far-sighted views or large conceptions or great schemes. A Minister beset with the administrative work of a great Office must often be astounded to read of the carefully laid plans, the deep, unrevealed motives that critics or admirers attribute to him. Onlookers free from responsibility have time to invent, and they attribute to Ministers many things that Ministers have no time to invent for themselves, even if they are clever enough to be able to do it. If all secrets were known it would probably be found that British Foreign Ministers have been guided by what seemed

to them to be the immediate interest of this country without making elaborate calculations for the future. Their best qualities have been negative rather than positive. They would not execute sharp turns or quick changes of front ; they were not disposed to make mischief or stir up strife amongst other nations, or to fish in troubled waters ; for their instinct was that peace and stability in Europe were the conditions best suited to British trade ; and they have generally shrunk from committing themselves for future contingencies, from creating expectations that they might not be able to fulfil, and from saying at any time more than they really meant. On the whole, the British Empire has been well served by these methods. It has, at any rate, been saved from capital and disastrous mistakes ; such mistakes as are made by a great thinker, calculating far ahead, who thinks or calculates wrongly. It has also been saved from the disaster of seeing a policy that needs for success the continuous supervision of a great man break down and be wrecked when its great author has been succeeded by inferior men. Critics may find many mistakes and shortcomings in British foreign policy of the last hundred years, and these may be legitimately exposed, or even derided ; but, when all has been said, let them ask, what other nation in Europe can,

after a review of the last hundred years, say confidently of its own policy, "*Si monumentum quaeris, circumspice*" ? The result, no doubt, is due to qualities of character or industry inherent in the race, to advantages of geographical position, to things that were not to be placed to the special credit of Ministers for Foreign Affairs ; but it is at least a tenable view that the conduct of those affairs has been suited to the development and needs of the Empire.

Whether the great European catastrophe of 1914 could have been prevented by any British statesmanship and other questions connected with that issue will be examined when the narrative reaches that point. I return to consider the reasons that made British policy in 1886 and afterwards lean to the Triple Alliance. The most obvious reason was that the British Empire had occasions of acute friction with France or with Russia, friction much more frequent and acute than with the countries of the Triple Alliance. We therefore sided with those with whom we had least cause of quarrel. It was also necessary to have diplomatic support in Egypt. Lord Cromer's work there was too important to be given up without loss and prejudice to British interests ; it was also too intrinsically good for Egypt, both financially and humanely, for us to think



of abandoning it without a sense of shame. But it could not be carried on without diplomatic support from the foreign representatives at Cairo, and, since we were confronted there by French and Russian opposition, the support of the Triple Alliance was essential to us. These are obvious, and, some people will perhaps think, sufficient reasons, but underlying and strengthening them, there was, I think, a belief that the power of the Triple Alliance made for stability and therefore peace in Europe; that France and Russia, though militarily the weaker, were the restless Powers, while the Triple Alliance was on the whole contented. The conclusion I would draw is that Great Britain has not in theory been adverse to the predominance of a strong group in Europe when it seemed to make for stability and peace. To support such a combination has generally been her first choice; it is only when the dominant Power becomes aggressive and she feels her own interests to be threatened that she, by an instinct of self-defence, if not by deliberate policy, gravitates to anything that can fairly be described as a Balance of Power.

## CHAPTER II

### FRICTION WITH GERMANY AND FRANCE

An Incident at Cairo—The Rough Side of German Friendship—French Suspicions—A Siamese Crisis—A Timely Apology—Trouble in West Africa—The "Grey Declaration" and its Origin—Cabinet Objections—Great Britain and Japan—The Beginning of Friendship.

I SOON became aware that the policy of friendship with the Triple Alliance, however satisfactory it might be to the Governments of Germany, Austria, and Italy, was not altogether comfortable for ourselves. Lord Rosebery had not been long at the Foreign Office before he had an unpleasant experience.

Turkey was entertaining projects for making railways to develop Asia Minor. Concessions for railways, or anything else, were not then to be obtained from the Turkish Government without diplomatic effort. An applicant for a concession, however economically sound and attractive the terms he offered, had little prospect of success unless supported by his own Government. Where diplomatic pressure was the rule, commercial interests could not succeed without it. British firms were applying for railway concessions in Asia Minor, and the British

Ambassador at Constantinople was, with the approval of the Foreign Office, giving them support. German firms were also applying, and the German Ambassador supporting them. Suddenly there came a sort of ultimatum from Berlin, requiring us to cease competition for railway concessions in Turkey for which Germans were applying, and stating that, unless we did so, the German Consul at Cairo would withdraw support from British administration in Egypt. Instructions in this sense were actually sent without delay to the German Representative at Cairo, and the German ultimatum was followed—almost accompanied—by a despairing telegram from Lord Cromer pointing out that it would be impossible to carry on his work in Egypt without German support in face of French and Russian opposition.<sup>1</sup>

It was the abrupt and rough peremptoriness of the German action that gave me an unpleasant impression. In a humorous account of the description given by one woman

<sup>1</sup> For the relations of Great Britain and Germany in regard to Egypt see Fitzmaurice's *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. i, chapters ix and xii: "Soon after the fall of the third Administration of Mr. Gladstone, Lord Salisbury, once more installed in power, recognized the necessity of an *entente* with Germany, and for many years to come the position of Great Britain in Egypt had to depend on the good-will of the Triple Alliance and of Germany in particular, which in that Alliance held the prerogative vote" (i. 453).

of another with whom she had had an altercation in an omnibus, the phrase occurs "with her the word is the blow." This was the German method. It cannot be said that in substance the contention was absolutely unreasonable ; the Germans were, at any rate, entitled to ask that, in return for German support in Egypt, we should not oppose some specified German interests elsewhere. Had this been suggested we could not fairly have refused to consider an arrangement, if one had been proposed that on the face of it was reasonable. But the method adopted by Germany in this instance was not that of a friend. There was no choice for us but to give way, unless we were ready to face the opening up of the whole Egyptian question without a single Great Power on our side. Lord Rosebery withdrew competition for the railway concessions in Turkey ; things in Egypt resumed their normal course, and the incident was over. But it left a sense of discomfort and a bad taste behind. It exposed rudely the insidious weakness due to our position in Egypt. It was open to Germany to repeat the squeeze, whenever she desired to exclude us from a commercial field in which she was interested. As long as we assumed responsibility for the government of Egypt, the Capitulations were like a noose round our neck, which any Great Power,

having rights under the Capitulations, could tighten at will. In this case the noose had been roughly jerked by Germany. The episode was an illustration of the hollowness of the phrase "splendid isolation." It was not "isolation," and it was far from being "splendid." This particular incident passed without any conscious effect on our policy, but it gave rise to some reflections upon the weakness of our position, and it may be that similar experiences were an element in the policy of our successors, the Unionist Governments of Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour.

There were, however, other things incidental to British policy at this period which were much more serious and unpleasant than an occasional exhibition of the rough side of German friendship. Among these was the constant friction, rising on the slightest provocation to quarrel and hostility, between Great Britain and France or Russia. The ground-swell of ill-will never ceased. British interests touched those of France and Russia in many parts of the world; and where interests touch, an atmosphere of ill-will is always dangerous. The blackest suspicion thrives in it, like a noxious growth under dark skies in murky air. The most simple and straightforward acts of one Government are attributed by the other to sinister motives; the agents of each Government on the

spot prick and stir their Colonial Office at home with accounts of what the agents of the other Government are doing ; the smallest incident may assume proportions that threaten the peace between great nations. So it was especially between Great Britain and France at this time. The controversy that arose about Siam in 1893 is an instance of how quickly and suddenly a catastrophe might have been caused by something that had little real importance. It is so good an illustration of this that it may be worth while to recall it in some detail.

France was laying claim, on behalf of her own possessions in Eastern Asia, to a frontier which the Siamese Government contended was an encroachment on Siamese territory. In Eastern Asia there are many points where territorial claims provide material for argument ; they grade from the most solid substance to the faintest shadows. It is not necessary now to revive argument over the merits of the controversy between France and Siam. Strange names, the river Mekong with its " Great Bend," Battambang and Angkor, and others were for a time " familiar in our mouths as household words," though we were only indirectly concerned. We had commercial interests in Siam, and the independence and integrity of Siam were therefore of concern to us ; Siam was a comparatively

weak State, and we waxed chivalrous. One leading member of the Conservative Party even threatened the French from the front Opposition bench with the Siamese Fleet, which he described as a compact and serviceable little squadron. We made no doubt that the French were making excessive claims, but we avowedly limited our action to precautions for the protection of British subjects and property at Bangkok, the capital of Siam situated on the River Menam.

For this purpose certain ships of the British Navy were sent to Siamese waters. The cruisers lay outside the mouth of the Menam; one gunboat, the *Linnet*, was sent up the river to lie at Bangkok and be absolutely on the spot to protect British lives and property in case of disorder. The French had sent ships of the French Navy to put pressure on Siam to yield to their territorial claims on the frontier. For this purpose the French declared a "pacific blockade" of Siam, and their ships of war drew the line of blockade outside the mouth of the Menam.

The British view was that there is no such thing as a "pacific blockade" and that we could not recognize what had no existence in international law. We could only recognize a "blockade" if it were an act of war. Controversy at once arose on this point. Then came two incidents that, for twenty-

four hours, were thought to make war between Great Britain and France inevitable.

A telegram was received saying that one of the French cruisers blockading the mouth of the Menam had turned its guns on a British cruiser at anchor, while steaming past it. This was a gross naval insult that would in naval etiquette have justified the captain of the British ship in firing on the French ship. The gesture of the French captain, though it was not replied to at the moment by opening fire, could not be ignored. An apology at least must be demanded, and, as the French act was apparently deliberate and intentional, it was presumed that an apology would not be forthcoming.

About the same time another telegram arrived saying that the French Admiral had ordered the *Linnet* to leave Bangkok. The *Linnet*, having been sent to Bangkok to protect British lives and property in case of disorder and the prospect of trouble being now more imminent than ever, we could not think of moving her. Nor, in any case, could she be ordered about by French naval officers. Lord Rosebery at once sent a telegram saying that the *Linnet* must stay at Bangkok. For some twenty-four hours it was supposed that the French had deliberately challenged us and that war was inevitable. It was reported in the Foreign Office that the



calculate the long chain of consequences as to render it safe for anyone to make unnecessary war. Bismarck may appear an exception; whether he was really or only apparently an exception may be considered when we come to the events of 1914. Far-seeing men may be able to calculate the direct consequences of a public act or policy; the indirect consequences are beyond human calculation; and it is the indirect consequences that in the long run are most important. A public man must have opinions and form decisions. He must act, and sometimes without delay; but when it comes to adopting unscrupulous means to be justified by the ends in view, some of the most brilliant public intellects have failed from not sufficiently remembering that they are fallible. What the indirect consequences would have been if Great Britain and France had gone to war in 1893 is a very interesting subject for speculation. Whole books might be written about it, but none of the conclusions would be convincing enough to anyone but their author to make the speculation profitable.

It was not only about Siam that we had friction with France. There were constant disputes and incidents in West Africa, besides a perpetual dispute about what we called the Treaty Shore and the French called the French Shore in Newfoundland. The national

interests involved on the French side in Newfoundland were very slight, but the controversy was time-honoured—dating from the Treaty of Utrecht—and an incident might at any moment arise that would involve sovereign rights on one side and be made a point of honour on the other. The British occupation of Egypt was a perpetual exasperation to the French, and their attitude with regard to it a constant irritant to us.

It was in West Africa that incidents most frequently occurred. British officials explored the country and made treaties with native chiefs on which we based our rights. French officials would overlap ours in their explorations and treaties; hence claims and counter-claims and confusion. It was sometimes possible to argue that a treaty had been made with a native chief who was not independent but subordinate, and that the treaty was therefore valueless; it may even have happened that an independent chief was ready for a consideration to make a treaty both with a British and a French official provided one came after the other. At any rate, one morning in March 1895 there came to the Foreign Office news of what were regarded as very unwarranted and provocative encroachments in West Africa. This sort of thing had been going on for some time, and it was always possible that someone in the

was clear that the Soudan would never be reconquered by Egypt again without British assistance, nor would the Soudanese again tolerate the purely Egyptian rule against which they had revolted. It was, at any rate, evident that no other Power except Egypt or someone acting on behalf of Egypt had any claim whatever to the Soudan and the Nile Valley.

There were vague rumours that a French expedition was on its way to that region, and it was on this that I was pressed. We felt sure no French expedition was on the way to the Nile, in which belief we were quite justified, for the Marchand expedition, as was ascertained later on, did not start while we were in office. There was, therefore, time to give France full warning of our view without putting her in a position of having to retreat or to abandon anything that she had yet done: it was impossible to provide an incident on the spot, for there were neither French nor British in the Soudan. Some such thoughts as these worked in my mind on the Treasury bench as I considered what I should say. The French would really be going far out of their way if they came right across Africa to the Upper Nile, and I felt some heat at the suggestion thrown out in the course of debate that the French might come into the Nile Valley. Whatever language

I had thought of using about West Africa, where there were conflicting claims and action, and where both British and French officials were active, was not suitable to the question of the Nile Valley. I therefore transferred to the subject of the Nile the firmness I had been authorized to show about competing claims in West Africa, and thought out, as carefully as the brief time and the obligation to give at any rate one ear to the speeches of others would allow, the words that I should use. Then I got up and did the best I could, being very careful to associate Egypt with Great Britain in any claim to the Soudan.<sup>1</sup>

The next day there was a row in Paris, and (so I understood) in Downing Street. Some members of the Cabinet, opposed to any expansion whatever in Africa and regarding even the occupation of Egypt as a regrettable commitment, disapproved of my speech; others, including, I gathered, Lord Rosebery, the Prime Minister, and Lord Kimberley, maintained that what I had said was defensible and salutary. Fortunately for the purpose of composing this difference of

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, March 28, 1895: "The advance of a French Expedition under secret instructions right from the other side of Africa into a territory over which our claims have been known for so long would be not merely an inconsistent and unexpected act, but it must be perfectly well known to the French Government that it would be an unfriendly act and would be so viewed by England."

opinion, the word "Egypt," which I had so carefully associated with Great Britain, had accidentally been omitted in the report of my speech. On this omission I gather that those who disapproved of the speech fastened. The way was then open to compromise. Those who thought that the speech should be approved agreed that the word "Egypt" should be inserted, and on this condition the others gave their consent to the speech being allowed to stand. The question of political rights and titles in the Soudan is now the subject of acute controversy with Egypt. Amid all political and juridical arguments one fact stands out hard and solid, which is that without British military organization, British effort and firm diplomacy, Egypt would have had no hand in the Soudan at all to-day.

The decision reached me by special messenger at my cottage in Hampshire, where I had gone to prune my roses at the week-end. I readily agreed to the insertion of a word that I had been careful to use; but the incident had its personal inconvenience for me. I find in the little journal that I kept of visits at the cottage an entry for March 30 and 31, 1895: "Pruning Sunday. Disturbed by work, and have to go up on Sunday evening." A few years later, when Lord Kitchener had taken Khartoum and come upon the Marchand

expedition and the French flag, I saw my speech appear like a State Paper in the documents published in the controversy that arose. As things turned out, the speech must have proved very useful, when I was out of office, to the Government that succeeded Lord Rosebery; but, looking back, I ask myself whether it may not have provoked the Marchand expedition; whether, if nothing had been said here, the French would ever have sent that expedition at all. If so, the speech would have been better left unspoken. If the Marchand expedition had already been determined upon in Paris, then the speech was not only defensible but valuable, and almost essential for defining in advance a position that the British Government would, if challenged, insist on maintaining at all costs. It is necessary to have a clear opinion at the time as to what is right, and to act upon it, but when an affair is over and one's own part is done, it is more interesting to put what is past to question in one's own mind and to review it, than simply to defend it without question, as if one were no wiser after the event than before.

On another matter that caused trouble with France at the time I will not dwell at length. King Leopold had occupied a claimed territory in the Upper Nile region that we held did not belong to the Congo State. We made an

agreement to regularize his occupation, but to secure to us the reversion of this non-Congo territory later on. The agreement also gave us a wayleave for a railway passing behind German East Africa to connect railways from South Africa with Uganda and thus to make a Cape-to-Cairo Railway practicable.

The Germans at once protested that this was contrary to a previous agreement between our Government and theirs, safeguarding them against a railway in this region that might prejudice railways in German territory. Investigation in the Foreign Office showed that this German protest was well founded: there was such an agreement, and it had been overlooked. This part, therefore, of the arrangement with King Leopold was at once withdrawn.

The French, claiming an interest in the Congo under a Franco-Belgian or Congo agreement giving France a contingent right of pre-emption to the Congo State, declared our agreement "*nul et non avenue*" as far as they were concerned. This contention we did not admit, as we held that the territory in the Nile region with which the agreement dealt did not belong to the Congo State at all. The agreement was certainly not fortunate at its birth, but it worked, and after the death of King Leopold it settled these troublesome matters without friction with

Belgium and with France, with whom the Entente of 1904 had smoothed away all these causes of dispute.

Two other transactions towards the end of this period must be recalled, which must have had their effect on future policy.

We made an agreement with Japan by which we gave up all those rights of jurisdiction over our British subjects in Japan that were still retained by European and American Governments over their own subjects in Oriental countries. It has sometimes been represented that in this negotiation Japan got the better of us and exacted from us more than we intended to concede. This was not so : we had made up our minds that the time had come when dealings with Japan must be put on the same equal terms as exist between nations of European origin ; only so would cordial political and successful commercial relations be preserved. We were the first country to negotiate such an agreement with Japan, and we were prepared to make it complete and to put our relations with Japan on the same footing as those with other nations.

Another step was also taken towards friendly relations with Japan, though it was one that arose out of circumstances not of our making, and was not foreseen or planned by us.



Japan had a short and successful war with China : no other Power took part or interfered while hostilities were in progress ; but after they were over France, Germany, and Russia invited us to join in an intimation to Japan that she would not be allowed to take all the fruits of victory that she claimed. Lord Kimberley refused to join in putting pressure on Japan ; the three other Powers acted without us, and Japan had to give way to diplomatic *force majeure*.

I do not believe that Lord Kimberley had any ulterior motive in the decision he took not to interfere. We did not consider that British interests required us to join in this interference with Japan's claims ; the threat to her by the European Powers appeared harsh and uncalled for, and it was repugnant to us to join in it. This decided us to stand aside ; there was certainly no thought in our minds then of a future alliance with Japan. We were moved simply by the feeling of the moment to stand aside from action that seemed to us disagreeably harsh and in which British interests did not require us to participate. Japan no doubt resented the interference of the European Powers, and resented it still more when Russia, not long afterwards, occupied Port Arthur herself and Germany exacted the concession of Shantung as compensation for the murder of a missionary.

The very Powers who had upheld against Japan the principle of the integrity of China proceeded to violate it themselves. The proceedings could not have been made more pleasant to Japan when the British Government, to counteract the presence of Russia at Port Arthur, secured from China the port of Wei-Hai-Wei, though, so far as I am aware, the concession of Wei-Hai-Wei was made willingly by China and deemed by her to be in her own interest after the Russian occupation of Port Arthur. Japan was now thus confronted with the establishment of three new European bases opposite her own shores, after having been forcibly prevented from taking one for herself. The integrity of China was to be a principle sacred against Japan, but not against European Powers, who had proclaimed it after Japan's victory over China.

The action of Great Britain in refusing to join in the coercion of Japan was naturally much appreciated by the Japanese. The direct consequence of the coercive action of France, Germany, and Russia upon Japan after the Japanese war with China was that Japan retired without the fruits of victory, which she much wished for: the indirect consequences were the Russian occupation of Port Arthur, followed by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the war between

Russia and Japan. What the further indirect consequences were of that war and that alliance may be left to those who have sufficient imagination to divine. It would be interesting to know how much the statesmen at Berlin, Paris, and St. Petersburg saw of the future consequences of their action, when in 1895 they decided on joint action to restrain Japan. I am sure that British Ministers at the time did not look beyond the moment. Probably it is seldom that public men see much beyond direct consequences. Even in looking back with full knowledge of the event it is impossible to trace the indirect consequences of a past act beyond the earlier stages: after that they are merged in the great movement of consequences of other acts; and the mind, in endeavouring to trace them, loses itself as it does in the attempt to conceive infinity. Even historians with knowledge of the event, and with the materials before them on which to form a judgment, see but a little way into the causes and consequences of the great events of history.

## CHAPTER III

### FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Training in Office—Life in London—Town Life and Country Life—The Fishing Cottage and its Uses—An Early Flitting—Rest and Recreation—True Luxury—A Depressing Contrast—Methods of Work and Public Speaking—Leaving the Foreign Office—An Unfulfilled Intention.

I HAVE now dealt with the episodes of work in the Foreign Office during the two years and ten months from August 1892 to June 1895 during which I was Under-Secretary. The first years of office are necessarily very important in the life of a young man. He undergoes steady training in industry and despatch ; he learns how to brace his mind to plough through the stiffest and least attractive material, to break up the most intractable clod ; his memory is practised in storing things in an orderly way in his head so that each is out of the way when not wanted, and yet can be found at once when required. The habit of quickly arriving at facile conclusions is checked ; for he is brought in contact with limitations and difficulties, which are encountered inside a public office and were not apparent when he was outside ; he finds the use of his own qualities, he is

made aware of the inconvenience, perhaps the danger, of his defects. The whole experience of office life is new to him and has its effects not only on his public but on his private life. It may not be out of place here to say something on this.

I had been elected to Parliament in 1885. My wife and I took a small furnished house in London for the Session of 1886. We had neither of us yet made much trial of town life, and the first spring did not pass without our becoming aware that it was intensely distasteful to us. The advantages, intellectual and social, of town life are obvious. To many people the very external circumstances and surroundings of this life become not only agreeable, but essential. Someone has told me the story of the town-lover, who, after a short trial of a quiet country retreat, left it because he could not endure the "tingling silence." To the lover of the country, its sights and sounds, its quiet and its pursuits, become as essential, as much part of his being as the advantages and circumstances of town life are to the lover of the town. It is as if there were two different atmospheres; some, perhaps most people, are so constituted that they can enjoy or tolerate either; there are some who feel they can breathe in the one and not in the other. If to an incompatibility of habit and temperament with town life,

there be added exile from the home, not only of manhood but of boyhood, with all its familiar rooms and furniture and surroundings and interests, it is inevitable that town life must be very uncongenial. This I knew well enough by 1892, and, realizing that the ties of office must intensify the exile, I entered it without any elation ; indeed with depression. It would be untrue to imply that the new position brought no interest or excitement ; it brought both, but without cancelling the drawback.

A permanent house in London was now necessary, and the salary as Under-Secretary was sufficient to enable us to take on lease a house in Grosvenor Road which we could furnish and where we could have furniture of our own choosing, while still keeping the country home available for such times as I could get there. But Northumberland was too far for week-end journeys, and already in 1890 we had put up a small bungalow in Hampshire, which could be shut up in the week and opened at week-ends. There I had one rod on a fishing on the Itchen, and the bungalow, or cottage, as we called it, was originally designed as a fishing cottage only. In the stress of office it became a sanctuary. The Session of 1893 was a strenuous one. Parliament met as usual early in the year ; there were, I think, five days' holiday only at

Easter, including Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Monday; the House of Commons did not adjourn till well on in September; it met again in October, and the Session lasted over Christmas and the New Year into January 1894. The Government majority was at most only forty, including over eighty Irish Nationalists; it was incumbent on all supporters of the Government to attend assiduously; the Irish did their part with that discipline and thoroughness with which the party always carried out any policy or arrangement upon which they had entered in the House of Commons, and they did it equally well, whether it was Irish Home Rule or an English measure like the Parish Councils Bill, in which they had no interest, that was under discussion. Liberal M.P.'s had to do equally well, and Under-Secretaries attended during the whole of every sitting, seldom or never venturing to leave the House for dinner. They had rooms in the lower regions; my own room had quite sufficient accommodation, and was comfortable enough, but it was like living in a cellar. The stream of Foreign Office boxes gave me comparatively little time to listen to debates. In these days the House of Commons had its short sitting on Wednesday; there was the normal late sitting on Friday evening, and no leaving London till Saturday.

The spring and summer of 1893 were unusually warm and fine. Every Saturday morning we left Grosvenor Road about half-past five in the early morning. We had no baggage, and at that hour there were no hansom cabs, so we walked across Lambeth Bridge, the river and houses presenting the same aspect of calm and quiet that inspired Wordsworth's "sonnet on Westminster Bridge." Thence our way went past St. Thomas's Hospital and along the street that then led to the entrance to Waterloo. This street we called Wood Street; at that early hour it was deserted, the houses shut, the only sound in it was the vigorous song of a thrush in a cage that hung outside one of the houses. The thrush was always singing at that hour, and the lines—

"At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,  
Hangs a thrush that sings loud,"

being familiar to us, we always spoke of the street as Wood Street, though that was not its real name. From this street the way led through the most unsavoury tunnel to the old Waterloo Station, and so we got away by the six o'clock train from Waterloo and to the Hampshire cottage soon after eight o'clock, in time for breakfast.

The start from London each Saturday



morning was one of rapture of anticipated pleasure :

“ Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven,”

and week after week the Saturday and Sunday fulfilled anticipations. On Saturday, in hot summer weather, I would fish till about two o'clock, and again from seven to nine o'clock in the evening. Sunday was not a fishing day then on that part of the Itchen, and we spent it reading great or refreshing books, going long walks in some of the most beautiful country in all the south of England, watching birds, much in the spirit of Keats's sonnet, “ To one who had been long in city pent,” except that there was no fatigue. The cottage, which had sprung into existence for the sake of the fishing, became much more than a fishing cottage and more even than a week-end retreat from London.

It revealed a peculiarly happy way of life. For twenty-five years it was tended with faithful and devoted care by one woman, and after her death in 1915 by her sister. They lived together in a cottage some few hundred yards away. There they had their own surroundings, garden and friends. Service for us did not mean absence from home for them ; when we were at the cottage we wanted rest, books, the enjoyment of the beauty of

the country, and opportunity to watch outdoor life. For this we wanted to be alone, and to have only the food and attendance that were really required for comfort. Work, duties, social intercourse, were for London. Life at the cottage suggested a definition of luxury—that of having everything that we did want and nothing that we did not want. It seemed to us that the omission of the second part of this definition made the failure of so much that is thought to be luxurious: by accident we had come upon true and exquisite luxury. The difficulty was to enjoy it in moderation: when I was in office the compulsion of official work enforced moderation; when we were free we had to determine how many days we could from time to time spend with a good conscience at the cottage.<sup>1</sup> Some Foreign Office papers there might be to read, but the Foreign Office work went on irrespective of whether the Parliamentary Under-Secretary was there or not, and there was no burden of responsibility on me. Then, every Monday morning, we went back to London, I to spend the morning at the Foreign Office and the rest of the day after luncheon in the cellar-room under the House of Commons, in which I could hear the

<sup>1</sup> The cottage was accidentally burnt, in January 1923, and after 1918 the failure of sight had interfered with much of the enjoyment of reading and outdoor pursuits.

unpleasant sounds, when the obstruction in the House was very rampant and demonstrative, as it frequently was then, or when, as sometimes happened, there was open disorder in the House. (Party feeling ran high in those days. We on the Liberal side felt we were right, that Unionist Government in Ireland had failed, and would continue to fail, that till there was Home Rule there would be no peace, and Ireland would be a source of perpetual weakness to us and a misery to herself. We had a parliamentary majority, which made any other policy than Home Rule impossible, and we considered ourselves entitled to pursue it. The Unionist Opposition disbelieved in Home Rule and hated it, and probably thought that we were straining the Constitution in attempting to pass so large a measure with so small a parliamentary majority, indeed without a British majority at all.)

In time the contrast between the life that I loved and the life that I led for five days every week affected my spirits.

I did the work of Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the best of my ability. I got up thoroughly every subject of which I had notice that I was to be questioned or that it was to be raised in the House ; and I read all that went on in the Foreign Office so carefully that I could deal with matters that might be

brought up without notice on the Foreign Office vote. In fact, whenever foreign affairs were to come up in the House I went there much better equipped to pass an examination than I had ever been at school or university. But there was no pleasure to me in the House of Commons work. I could express clearly to others what I had previously made clear to my own mind, but beyond that there was no natural gift for speaking. I never had a peroration ; I could neither compose one nor repeat it by heart if I had been able to compose it ; and yet I had not the art of stopping effectively without a peroration, as Samuel Butler says Handel does in his music : " When Handel means stopping he stops as a horse stops, with little, if any, peroration " (I quote from memory). Early in 1894 Mr. Gladstone retired ; I was personally devoted to Lord Rosebery, who succeeded him, and was particularly in agreement with him on Imperial matters, and his succession as Prime Minister had my warm support and placed me under a special obligation to work for his Government. By extraordinary ill fortune Lord Rosebery had a severe and most depressing attack of influenza in the short time he was Prime Minister, and I became increasingly aware that, with the great figure of Mr. Gladstone retired, with the unifying influence of his authority and

prestige removed, the Liberal Party, with its differing shades of opinion, personal and political, was for the present no instrument fit for achieving great things. A sense of the futility of it all now added to the depression caused by party bitterness and by town life and exile from home. In June 1895 the Government of Lord Rosebery was defeated in a division on the War Office vote in the House of Commons and resigned. I was set free, and left office with the expectation and the intention of never returning to it.

Inside the Foreign Office I had found the personnel pleasant, and I left it with a grateful sense of their kindness and of the experience gained there. I had from the first taken the view that we must take over British East Africa and Uganda, and the Cabinet had eventually come to the same conclusion. For the rest, I had been content to follow and to understand without attempting to influence policy. The general impression left of our position in the world was not comfortable; we relied on German support in Egypt, and received it; but we never could be sure when some price for that support might not be exacted. At any moment we were liable to have a serious difference with France or Russia, and it was evident that these differences were not unwelcome at Berlin and to German diplomacy. But I certainly had no

idea of a change of policy, and I do not think that my chiefs contemplated anything of the kind.

In the light of after-events, the whole policy of these years from 1886 to 1904 may be criticized as having played into the hands of Germany. I am not concerned to examine that criticism here. The Liberal tenure of the Foreign Office from August 1892 to June 1895 was but a short period of the time. Mr. Gladstone's Government continued the policy of Lord Salisbury as they found it; when Lord Salisbury returned to the Foreign Office in 1895 he saw no more reason to change that policy than Lord Rosebery or Lord Kimberley had done; he continued it. Indeed, as will presently appear, his Government went farther on the road of complaisance and advance to Germany than before. The time to review this policy will be when the period—nine years later—is reached in which the Government of which Lord Lansdowne was Foreign Secretary made at last a new departure.

## CHAPTER IV

### OUT OF OFFICE

Two Tendencies of these Years—The Strain with France—Increasing Difficulties with Germany—A New Situation in the Far East—The Russians at Port Arthur—Chamberlain's "Long Spoon" Speech—The Fashoda Incident—Lieut. Marchand's Gallantry—Chamberlain's Overture to Germany—A German Opportunity and its Rejection—A Secret Agreement—The South African War—Continental Hostility—Beginning of the German Big Fleet—The Anglo-Japanese Alliance—The Anglo-French Agreement—Reasons for welcoming it—German Suspicions—Lord Rosebery's View—The Dogger Bank Incident—The Hard Case of Russia—The Pleasures of Opposition—Railway Work—The Chairmanship of the North-Eastern Railway.

TEN years and a half were now to pass before I entered the Foreign Office again. After I returned to it I heard incidentally, in conversation with officials in the office, some interesting comments and information upon some of the episodes in foreign politics that happened in this period. I was, however, when Secretary of State, much too hard pressed by current work to have leisure to look up old papers and read the records in the Foreign Office of what had been done while I was in Opposition ; and, since I was not responsible during these years, I have purposely refrained, in preparing this book, from

asking for documents relating to them. I can therefore write of the events of this period only as anyone may do who did not participate in them and knew them only by the Press and other public sources of information. We all know what happened and what was done ; we do not know, or know only in part, how things happened and why they were done by those who did them. Those who are outside see the result ; the real motive and the full thought can be told only by those who decide and execute policy.

It is, however, necessary to give some account of the events in foreign affairs of this period, for during it the foreign policy of Great Britain slowly took another direction ; bent thither, I judge, rather by the persistent pressure of circumstances than by any definite plan or initiative of Lord Salisbury. It was not till after his retirement in 1902 that any change of direction was apparent ; indeed, in November 1899 there was an attempt, manifested by a speech of Mr. Chamberlain's, to which reference will be made presently, to push British policy in the direction of closer relations with Germany, which was not the direction subsequently taken.

What, then, do we see in the course of events after June 1895 ? In the main we see two tendencies. One is that the strain of our relations with France and Russia is intensified.



The Russian occupation of Port Arthur, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the Russo-Japanese War and the incidents consequent upon it illustrate what I mean as regards Russia. Lord Kitchener's advance into the Soudan, his discovery there of the French expedition of Lieutenant Marchand at Fashoda, and the controversy thereon with France illustrate what is meant with regard to France. Things were constantly happening that brought us nearer to an open breach with France or with Russia.

The other tendency was for Anglo-German relations to become stiffer. What I have called the rough side of German friendship became more rough. A brief account of leading events will show these two tendencies at work.

In the first months of Lord Salisbury's Government, in which Mr. Chamberlain took the Colonial Office, there occurred the Jameson Raid upon the Transvaal. When all the facts were known many people at home felt indignant that an act of gross aggression should have been perpetrated by any British persons or organized on British territory; they were disgusted by the hollow pretext, put forward by those who defended it as necessary to protect women and children in Johannesburg: to everybody the collapse of the Raid showed that it was an act of folly. We could not, therefore, be surprised that the raid was con-

demned by foreign opinion, nor could we justly resent that condemnation. But why should the German Emperor make it his business, and his alone, to appear as the friend and even the champion of President Krüger? The German Emperor's telegram to President Krüger did undoubtedly cause both surprise and resentment in Britain. It passed, however, without incident, for the raid had put Britain clearly in the wrong and President Krüger in the right, and our business was to clear up the mess as best we could by legal prosecution of the chief actors in the raid and by parliamentary enquiry into the responsibility for it. It is not necessary to pursue the matter further, but the German Emperor's telegram, though it made no diplomatic "incident," had its effects on British minds. Suspicion grew, later on, that Germany was encouraging President Krüger in order to make trouble for Britain in South Africa, and, though the dramatic demonstration of the German Emperor's telegram may not have initiated this suspicion, the recollection of the telegram strengthened it in later and more dangerous years.

Another event, already glanced at, that had much more immediate impact and repercussion on foreign policy was the Russian occupation of Port Arthur. This caused a serious potential alteration of the naval position in

the Far East. Russia, it is true, had already a port at Vladivostok, but it was frozen in winter. Port Arthur, more sheltered and farther to the south, was a port open all the year and presumably capable of being made a permanent and formidable naval base. The Russian occupation of it was therefore a matter of serious concern in its relation to the British naval position in the Far East. The British Government negotiated with the Chinese to lease Wei-Hai-Wei as a counterpoise to the Russian move, the object no doubt being to have a base in the north of China, where a British naval force could be stationed to control any naval force that Russia might base upon Port Arthur. Even so, however, the relative naval position in the Far East was felt to be altered to our disadvantage, and there was much criticism of Lord Salisbury's Government, to which some members of that Government were no doubt sensitive. The Russian method of procedure had also caused resentment. British ships had been on a visit to Port Arthur ; the Russian Government had, in a friendly manner, pointed out that the presence of British ships of war in that region was a source of uneasiness. Lord Salisbury, in a friendly spirit, had let the British vessels depart. The Russians then went to Port Arthur themselves, not on a visit, but on a long lease.

This result was very provoking ; criticism at home was sharp, the Russian methods were exasperating. The feeling aroused found its strongest expression in a speech of Mr. Chamberlain's. This was not the first time that Mr. Chamberlain had occasion to put a foot down about Russia. In a speech that I heard at the Eighty Club early in 1885 he had referred to the Penjdeh incident. He was then the leader of what were considered extreme Radicals, and the speech was devoted to domestic affairs ; he was supposed by his Conservative opponents to be a Little Englander, in favour of a weak and retiring policy abroad. There was at the time sharp friction with Russia over the Penjdeh incident on the Afghan frontier and Mr. Chamberlain spoke of it in a very firm manner, though that was not then the rôle expected of him. Not more than ten years later he was not only a leading member of a Unionist Government, but looked up to as the great Imperialist in British politics. There was no question, when he spoke, of going to war about Port Arthur ; the Russian occupation was an accomplished fact, but Mr. Chamberlain expressed the resentment felt by the comment that " he who sups with the devil must have a long spoon." A notable milestone, indeed, on the road to war with Russia.

British relations with France were once more

heated to the point of danger by the Fashoda affair. Soon after the Unionist Government came into power it was decided to reconquer the Soudan. The operation was completely successful, and Khartoum was occupied in September 1898. In advancing farther up the Nile, Lord Kitchener came upon a French expedition that had crossed Africa from the west, and, after a very bold and adventurous journey, had established itself and the French flag at Fashoda. The situation was at once acute. The leader of the French expedition, Lieutenant Marchand, with his gallant but small party, was in no position to offer serious resistance to Lord Kitchener's army ; he was far away from any touch or communication with French territory. Indeed, till Lord Kitchener opened up the Soudan by his advance it is doubtful whether the French Government knew what had become of the Marchand expedition or where it was. But, being there with the flag, Lieutenant Marchand could not yield except to force. If Lord Kitchener used force there was an act of war between Britain and France. The facts were disclosed to the world, and the men on the spot waited for their respective Governments to decide what should be done. The diplomatic contest began, and public opinion and the Press on both sides were excited. It was impossible for Britain to admit any foreign

claim to the Nile Valley, and the Government could say only one thing, viz. that the French expedition must withdraw.

We had given ample warning of our claims (here my speech of 1895 was quoted), and the French expedition was a wanton challenge to them, for France had really no interest of her own to protect in the Nile Valley. On the other hand, France did not admit our claim, and French honour was involved. The situation did not admit of compromise; it could not be settled on paper; one side or other had to give way. For a time there was an angry diplomatic impasse. Happily, there were aspects of the situation that were soothing and some which irresistibly suggested an under-sense of humour. There are situations in which two people are very earnest and serious and yet in which each knows that, if he were not so deadly serious, he would be laughing. The soothing side of the Fashoda discovery was that Lieutenant Marchand had really performed a remarkably bold and skilful feat of African travel and thereby, by common consent, contributed to the honour of France. The feature that suggested humour was that the very gallantry of the French expedition had placed it in such a perilous and isolated situation that Lord Kitchener's advance was rather a rescue than a menace. It was at least doubtful whether the French expedition

could have survived against the Khalifa had Lord Kitchener not disposed of the Khalifa in time ; and, now that the Khalifa was gone, the route opened up by Lord Kitchener was the only one by which the French expedition could communicate with France or the civilized world. Were French interests or French honour really involved in maintaining claims under such conditions ? Lord Rosebery intervened in the public discussion with the remark that, after all, a flag was a very portable object. In the end the French expedition returned to the civilized world with all honour by the way that Lord Kitchener's advance and conquest had made practicable. Some of these side-lights relieved the dark and threatening aspect of the affair ; but it caused much bitterness, and it was one more evidence and warning that the persistence of ill-will between Britain and France would lead to indefinite multiplication of provoking incidents, and in the long run to war.

What effect all these affairs had on the mind of Lord Salisbury or of Mr. Balfour and Lord Lansdowne, who were afterwards active in giving a new direction to British foreign policy, I do not know, but Mr. Chamberlain evidently came to the conclusion that British policy must be given a more definite direction in one way or another. The direction that he chose was not the one that was eventually

taken ; it was not the policy of coming to an understanding with France or Russia about the questions that threatened the peace between them and us ; it was that of an alliance with Germany. He indicated his choice in a speech at Leicester (November 30, 1899), of which the relevant passage must be quoted :—

There is something more which I think any far-seeing English statesman must have long desired, and that is that we should not remain permanently isolated on the continent of Europe, and I think that the moment that aspiration was formed it must have appeared evident to everybody that the natural alliance is between ourselves and the great German Empire. We have had our differences with Germany, we have had our quarrels and contentions, we have had our misunderstandings. I do not conceal that the people of this country have been irritated, and justly irritated, by circumstances which we are only too glad to forget ; but, at the root of things, there has always been a force which has necessarily brought us together. What, then, unites nations ? Interest and sentiment. What interest have we which is contrary to the interest of Germany ?

I cannot conceive any point which can arise in the immediate future which would bring ourselves and the Germans into antagonism of interests. On the contrary, I can see many things which must be a cause of anxiety to the statesmen of Europe, but in which our interests are clearly the same as the interests of Germany and in which that understand-



ing of which I have spoken in the case of America might, if extended to Germany, do more, perhaps, than any combination of arms in order to preserve the peace of the world.

If the union between England and America is a powerful factor in the cause of peace, a new Triple Alliance between the Teutonic race and the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon race will be a still more potent influence in the future of the world. I have used the word "alliance," but again I desire to make it clear that to me it seems to matter little whether you have an alliance which is committed to paper, or whether you have an understanding in the minds of the statesmen of the respective countries. An understanding is perhaps better than an alliance, which may stereotype arrangements which cannot be regarded as permanent in view of the changing circumstances from day to day.

The whole conception is quite simple and clear. The greatest Fleet in the world was the British; the greatest Army was the German. The Fleet and the Army could not fight each other; let there be an alliance between them, and they could maintain their own interests and keep Europe in order. The speech was a public invitation to Germany and a public recommendation of policy to Britain and the British Empire. It made a great and critical moment, fraught with the greatest possibilities. How far Mr. Chamberlain was authorized to speak for Lord Salisbury and his colleagues, or how far he had consulted

them, I cannot say. On this point I heard nothing, then or afterwards ; but I was told in the Foreign Office in after-years that the speech was made after Mr. Chamberlain had met the German Emperor and Count (afterwards Prince) Bülow, then German Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who were on a visit to England. The Foreign Office information to me was very definite that Mr. Chamberlain's speech was not made without reason to expect that it would meet with response from the German Government.<sup>1</sup> In short, the belief in the Foreign Office was that the German Emperor or Count Bülow, one or both, had encouraged the idea of a public pronouncement in England in favour of an Anglo-German Alliance. The Foreign Office account to me of the matter was, that the suggestion for an alliance with us was coldly received in Germany, and that at Paris and St. Petersburg German diplomacy turned it to account, representing it as an offer that Germany might have accepted and had declined. If so, it was very short-sighted of the agents of the German Government. There is nothing more futile than a momentary diplomatic score off a Foreign Minister or his country. It is worse than futile ; it has later on to be paid for, and it wrecks that confidence which is

<sup>1</sup> See, on this subject, Asquith's *Genesis of the War*, p. 22.

as essential in permanent relations between Governments as it is between great commercial houses. It is sometimes suggested that it was British Imperialism that brought us into conflict with Germany. Let those who think so, either in this country or outside it, take note of the fact that the policy of alliance and co-operation with Germany was, up to the time of Mr. Chamberlain's speech, desired and advocated by the two most convinced, energetic, and influential exponents and promoters of British Imperialism. Mr. Chamberlain's speech and Mr. Cecil Rhodes's will are striking evidence of this.

At this moment Germany had the opportunity of a British Alliance, based on the fact that one had a fleet and the other an army; that the fleet and the army could not be rivals, but could give invincible support to each other.

In the light of after-events, ought we to wish that the alliance had been made? And what would have been the probable course of history if it had been made? It will be better to discuss the answers to those questions when the after-events have been reviewed. Germany let the suggestion of an alliance drop; the opportunity passed; Lord Salisbury made no change in policy; Germany presently embarked on the policy of a great fleet, and other events happened that

prevented the suggestion of an Anglo-German Alliance from being renewed.

For some time British foreign policy went on much as before. There was the same dependence on German support in Egypt ; the same concession from time to time to some German demand. The instance I have in mind is the Secret Agreement with Germany about the Portuguese Colonies in Africa. It is still officially " Secret," but, as the German Government made it public to the world during the war, there was no secrecy about it. I had to deal with the question when I was at the Foreign Office, and when I come to that part of the narrative a full account of the final stage will be given. I had occasion then to look at the old papers in the Foreign Office to see what agreement was made. It seemed to me clear, from what I saw in them, that the Agreement had been made very reluctantly so far as Lord Salisbury was concerned, and only in deference to German insistence—pressure would hardly be too strong a word. Crudely put, the German insistence was this : " You [Britain] are on bad terms with Russia and on bad terms with France. You cannot afford to be on bad terms with us." Years afterwards, when I was at the Foreign Office, the Marquis de Soveral gave me an entertaining account of how the Agreement came to be signed. He was Portuguese Minister in Lon-

don at the time ; he had known all about the negotiation and the signature of the " Secret " Agreement, and had made no secret to Lord Salisbury of his knowledge of it. This transaction must have given further cause for serious reflection at the Foreign Office.

In 1899 came the South African War. There was much division of opinion at home about it. Many people thought that President Krüger's policy had the larger share of responsibility. Some Liberals, of whom I was one, as well as the supporters of the Government, took this view.

Others who admitted, as Mr. (afterwards Lord) Bryce had said in his book about South Africa, that President Krüger's policy had been a cause of trouble, yet held that the war was unjustifiable. This view, as I understand it, was that President Krüger was an old man ; that the defects of his policy were recognized by the younger men with broader outlook, who would succeed him ; and that the British Government, by the exercise of a reasonable amount of patience, could have in no very long time secured British interests and put peace on a firm foundation of good-will in South Africa without any war at all.

There were others who, with less study of the question, regarded the war as an attack upon a small country by aggressive British Imperialism.

It is unnecessary to discuss now which of these three views was right at the time, or what degree of justice there was in any of them. It is well not to revive old unhappy things, or reopen wounds that time and true statesmanship on both sides have done so much to heal, though the scars may still be in the memory of those who suffered.

It was the last of these three views that prevailed on the Continent. The war was regarded as aggression upon a small State; and sympathy with the Boers and dislike of Britain found free and even vehement expression. In Germany this feeling was as pronounced as in other countries—if anything, it was even stronger. This was particularly resented in Britain, and I have heard a German complain that we should have resented so strongly in the case of Germany, a manifestation of feeling that was generally shared and expressed in other countries. The reasons for public sentiment are often more unconscious than conscious, and are not always easy to analyse; but in this instance it was suspected, if not entirely known, that President Krüger had for some time received German encouragement in a policy unfriendly to us. Support was given to this view by recollection of the German Emperor's telegram to President Krüger at the time of the Jameson Raid and by the fact that, when President

Krüger came to Europe, it was the German Emperor that he asked to see. It is true that, when it came to the point, the Emperor declined to see him, but the evidence of previous communications, combined with the hostility of the German Press, prevented this from being regarded as an act of friendship. The friction with Germany found expression in an open passage of arms between Count Bülow, the German Chancellor, and Mr. Chamberlain. In this Mr. Chamberlain stood his ground, and British opinion supported him. All this had its effect on British opinion, and if in Government circles more was known than the public knew there must again have been serious cause for reflection on the discomfort, if not the actual insecurity, of Britain's position.

✓By the year 1900 Germany had made it manifest that she was adopting a new naval policy—that of a big fleet. Hitherto British naval shipbuilding had been based on a two-Power standard. The French and Russian fleets had been regarded as the only potential enemies. The South African War had shown that we were completely isolated, that every fleet was a possible enemy. Would it not be positively dangerous for the British Government to let matters drift as they had been doing in foreign policy for so many years? Could we afford to let probable causes of con-

fluct remain without any attempt to remove them? Some such questions, I suppose, must have become urgent in the thought of British Ministers of the day. (Two steps, at any rate, they took that were more definite and positive acts of policy than anything that British Governments had done for a long time. The first was the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, made in 1902; the other was the Agreement with France in 1904. It is interesting to observe that these two steps were apparently not parts of one settled policy. Each was like a first step in a different policy. France and Russia were allies. Protection against their joint fleets was our standard. There were two alternative policies or ways by which we might endeavour to guard against causes of conflict—one was to make an alliance with another Power for protection against France or Russia, the other was by friendly negotiation with these Powers to smooth away and remove possible causes of conflict. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was a step in the direction of the first policy; the Anglo-French Agreement was a step in the direction of the second.

The explanation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance is simple enough. The fact and circumstances of the Russian occupation of Port Arthur had made it appear that the most probable cause of conflict with Russia was in the Far East. In the seventies of the



last century the danger-point had seemed to be Constantinople and the Near East. Russia had dropped the policy of pushing against Turkey, and Turkey was now fortified by German friendship and the increasing commercial stake that Germany was acquiring in Turkey.

Then, in the eighties, there had continued the excursions and alarums about Russian advances towards the Indian frontier. These had died down or evaporated on the great altitudes or in the deserts of Asia. It was in the Far East that Russia seemed now to be concentrating. This was a menace more serious to Japan than us ; the recollection of the diplomatic coercion of Japan in 1895 by Russia, Germany, and France, and of British refusal to join in that coercion, made the Anglo-Japanese Alliance an easy, almost an obvious, transaction.

It was, however, with France that the most vital points of dispute were likely to occur : it was between Britain and France that a storm might most suddenly arise and be so violent as to sweep the two countries into war with each other. The counterpart to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the application of the same policy to France, would have been an alliance with Germany. But the opportunity for that had passed, when Mr. Chamberlain made his overture. It is interesting

to observe how inevitably one comes, in this period, to quote Mr. Chamberlain to illustrate tendencies in foreign policy. It was he who spoke the strong word about the Russian occupation of Port Arthur; it was he who advocated a German Alliance; it was in his passage of arms with the German Chancellor that friction with Germany over the South African War found expression. It is as if he had been the most sensitive barometer by which to read tendencies in foreign policy. The time when it had pointed to "set fair" in Anglo-German relations had gone by. The Government of Mr. Balfour, who had succeeded Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister, adopted with France the policy of an understanding that should remove causes of dispute by mutual good-will and agreement.

Lord Lansdowne and M. Delcassé were the Secretaries for Foreign Affairs in London and Paris respectively, and I imagine that the ground must have been prepared by long and patient work in which M. Cambon, the French Ambassador in London, no doubt took great part. Egypt was the perpetual sore point: French objection to British occupation of Egypt had for long been a cardinal point of French policy and opinion. It could not be easy to make an agreement on this point that would be acceptable to France. In countries like Egypt, where foreign nations

have extra-territorial rights, it is not enough that they should cease to object to our presence ; active support is required for some essential problems of Government, such as taxation and the administration of justice. To make our position satisfactory we were bound to have French support, not merely the assurance that there would be no French obstruction. Otherwise causes of friction would continue, and we should remain as dependent as before upon the Triple Alliance, that is, upon German support. Eventually an agreement was made of which the salient point was that France would give diplomatic support to us in Egypt, and we would give the same to her in Morocco.

On the face of the Agreement with France there was nothing more than a desire to remove causes of dispute between the two nations, to make up old quarrels, to become friends. It was all made public, except a clause or two of no importance, which were not published at the time, owing to regard, as I suppose, for the susceptibilities of the Sultan of Morocco : even these were published a few years later. Was it in the minds of those who made the simple, straightforward Agreement for settling present differences that it would develop into something more, into what was called the *Entente Cordiale*—a general *diplomatic* alliance with no new obligations, but with preparations

for the contingency of a German attack on France? Was this in the minds of the men in London and Paris when they were making the Agreement? Or was it brought about solely by the efforts of Germany to shake or break the Agreement after it was made?

I cannot say. There is in great affairs so much more, as a rule, in the minds of the events (if such an expression may be used) than in the minds of the chief actors. I remember very well what my own feeling was when I read the Agreement. It was a feeling of simple pleasure and relief. I saw all that had been most disagreeable in my experience at the Foreign Office from 1892-5 swept away. We should no longer be dependent on German support in Egypt, with all the discomfort that this dependence had entailed. I had no desire to thwart German interests, but we should now be able to negotiate with Germany without the handicap of the Egyptian noose round our necks. That was a welcome relief; but that appeared to me an incidental and not the main advantage of the Agreement—a by-product and not the chief matter.

The real cause for satisfaction was that the exasperating friction with France was to end, and that the menace of war with France had disappeared. The gloomy clouds were gone, the sky was clear, and the sun shone warmly. Ill-will, dislike, hate, whether the object of

them be a person or a nation, are a perpetual discomfort; they come between us and all that is beautiful and happy. They put out the sun. If the object be a nation with whom our interests are in contact they poison the atmosphere of international affairs. This had been so between Britain and France. The writing of the Press on each side of the Channel had been a constant source of annoyance and wrath. That was all to be changed; it was to become positively pleasant. To see what is pleasant, where we have seen before only what was repellent; to understand and to be understood where before there had been misrepresentation and misconstruction; to be friends instead of enemies—this, when it happens, is one of the great pleasures of life. That was enough for me at the time; I felt as if there were some benign influence abroad, and in that spirit I spoke in welcome of the Agreement in the House of Commons.<sup>1</sup>

It was indeed obvious that Germany would not like the Agreement. She had profited by the constant dissensions between Britain and France. Was it not said that after 1870 Bismarck had deliberately encouraged French expansion in Africa, foreseeing that this would keep Britain and France occupied with each other? But really good relations with Germany could not be founded on bad

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B, Vol. III, p. 278.

relations with France ; I saw no reason why we should be hostile to German interests, where Germany was expanding, and, if we were not, why should the Agreement with France mean bad relations with Germany ? In British minds, certainly in my own, the Anglo-French Agreement was not regarded as more than I have described it. It was the subsequent attempts of Germany to shake or break it that turned it into an Entente. These attempts were not long in coming. The German Emperor made a visit that was like a demonstration at Tangier, and in 1905 the German Government forced the French, by what was practically a challenge, to dismiss M. Delcassé (their Minister for Foreign Affairs who had made the Franco-British Agreement) and to agree to an international conference about Morôcco.

One man there was, of great position in public life, who was an exception to the general approval of the Anglo-French Agreement. I do not know that he ever expressed his views in public, but he made no secret to me that he thought it a mistake and that he disagreed with my support of it. The German Army, he remarked, was the strongest in the world. When M. Delcassé was sacrificed he said to me, " Your friends the French are trembling like an aspen." The time cannot have been comfortable for Lord

Lansdowne and for the British Government. The French were being humiliated because of an Agreement that we had made with them. The Agreement bound us only to *diplomatic* support, but the German attitude threatened more than diplomatic action. If Germany used force, and France were in serious trouble, what was our position to be? We had no obligation, none whatever, to which France could appeal, to go beyond diplomatic support; but could we stand aside complacently and see her suffer for something in which we were her partner.

Such was the prospective situation with which Mr. Balfour's Government were confronted in 1905.\* Of what they did, or how they regarded it, I knew nothing at the time and I had no expectation then of ever having to deal with it myself. The French tided over the crisis in 1905 by letting M. Delcassé go from the Foreign Office; the German Emperor emphasized the occasion by making Count Bülow a Prince. The personal triumph over M. Delcassé was complete, and by the French agreement to a Conference the question of Morocco was postponed. The crisis had passed for the moment, to be faced again later on when the Conference should meet. Before that time came there had been a change of Government at home. I had gone to the Foreign Office, and from that point this

narrative will resume the account with full knowledge and in detail.

One other outstanding event at the end of this period must be noticed. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance had put Japan in a position to avenge the slight and retrieve the loss inflicted upon her by the combination of European Powers in 1895. She could now try conclusions with Russia alone. If any other European Power were to help Russia, then Britain would be bound to come to the assistance of Japan; and the British and Japanese fleets together would be amply strong enough to prevent any European combination against Japan. The Russo-Japanese War came in due course. It was not without incident for us. The Russian fleet, on its way out to the Far East, fired on British fishing vessels in the North Sea. The act was due to a high state of suspicion and nervous tension on the part of the Russian fleet. It was not credible that the Russians knew they were firing on unarmed peaceful fishing vessels, though it was difficult to believe that they really thought it possible for Japanese torpedo-boats to be in the North Sea, as they said. It was therefore not easy to understand what the Russians did think they were firing at, and why their guns went off at all. There was a moment of great and natural excitement in public opinion, but the



British Government kept the affair under control, and it was settled without further consequences.

The Russian fleet pursued its journey. In Madagascar it received facilities and hospitality from the French beyond what the rules of international law generally understood to allow to belligerent ships in neutral ports. It seemed to me at the time that Japan might have urged that the action of France had gone beyond the limits of neutrality; that Japan could have appealed to the Anglo-Japanese Treaty and have requested us to take some counter-action. So far as I knew, Japan did not raise the question, being confident, no doubt, of her ability to deal with the Russian fleet when it arrived, and not desiring to invoke the letter of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty for help that she did not need. The Russian fleet, without further incident, went to its fate at the battle of Tsushima. Japan won the war, and peace was made by the representatives of Russia and Japan meeting on American soil under the auspices of President Roosevelt. One of the conditions of peace was the cession of Port Arthur by Russia to Japan. The method by which Russia had acquired Port Arthur made the cession of it to Japan seem to be an act of mere justice. Japan had been ordered away in 1895 by Russia, France, and Germany, after a suc-

cessful war with China, on the ground that the integrity of Chinese territory was a sacred principle that must not be violated. Russia had then occupied the place herself on a long lease extorted from China, without regard to the principle of integrity of Chinese territory, so lately proclaimed sacred against Japan. If Port Arthur was not to remain Chinese, Japan clearly had a better right to it than Russia, after all that had passed.

On the other hand, I could not but reflect that, apart from the merits of the Port Arthur affair, the case of Russia was hard. This mighty Empire needed and was ever seeking an outlet to a sea that did not freeze. By far the greater part of the world's commerce is sea-borne ; the oceans are the great highways of commerce. With few exceptions, every nation, small or great, had its own ports on this great thoroughfare. Russia, with the most extensive territory and a huge population, had no outlet under her own control ; not one where she could keep a fleet that would not be frozen up in winter. In the Near East access to the Mediterranean had been barred to her, notably by Britain under Lord Beaconsfield. Lord Lansdowne, the British Minister for Foreign Affairs, had lately made a declaration that was a warning not to touch the Persian Gulf. That barred the Middle East outlet to a warm sea. And now the

British Alliance with Japan had deprived Russia of the outlet of Port Arthur in the Far East. Was it possible ever to have peace and quiet, or indeed to have anything but recurrent friction with Russia on such terms? The question of Port Arthur might be settled on terms of justice as between Russia and Japan, but the problem of British relations with Russia remained. Our most important points of contact with Russia were not in the Far East, and it was in the Far East only that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance made us secure. It did not apply elsewhere. Something, at any rate, of this I remember to have been in my mind at the time.

After the war Japan was extremely popular. The smaller nation had beaten the giant; British sporting instincts were gratified; we admired the efficiency to which the Japanese had attained and the rapidity with which they had learnt what we had to teach of naval construction and equipment, and the handling of things so complicated as modern ships of war. This feeling seemed to us natural, reasonable, and right. Not long afterwards I was told a story that put it in another light. The story ran that a Japanese in England, finding himself and his nation to be objects of admiration, reflected thus upon the course of events: "Yes," he said, "we used to be a nation of artists; our art was

really very good ; you called us barbarians then. Now our art is not so good as it was, but we have learnt how to kill, and you say we are civilized."

The story was familiar to me long before the Great War ; whether it is a true story I never knew, but there was a truth in it that gave a feeling of discomfort, of question. What was the answer to such an observation ? Was there something very wrong about our civilization and the virtues of which we felt so sure ? The Great War has given a terrible answer.

For me personally these years of opposition were a time of happy detachment. I could take as much or as little share in public life as I felt moved to do. I could express individual views, and did so, sometimes differing from the majority of the Liberal Party. If this was resented in the Liberal Party my reply was that I had no desire for office, and that, if my constituents did not approve my views, I was ready and should even be pleased to stand aside. The leaders of the Liberal Party themselves were not all in harmony, and the leadership changed three times in these ten years. By 1902, however, the things on which I had differed from many Liberals had ceased to be present and active causes of difference. The South African War was over ; the reconquest of the Soudan was accom-



together. In this way they got to know each other well, and for all the time they were at York they were in the atmosphere of the business of the railway. The Board included some of the ablest and most experienced and soundest men of business in the country ; the meetings were always interesting, as well as pleasant. The railway was a great separate organization, playing a great part and spending large capital in the development of the prosperous industrial area of the North-East of England from the Humber to the Tweed, on which our whole interest and attention were concentrated.

Only twice in the year did the railway business take me to London ; the other meetings were all at York or Newcastle. The North-Eastern Railway no longer exists as a separate institution, and many things have changed since those easier and simpler days. In 1898 Sir Matthew Ridley was Home Secretary, and yet retained a seat on the Board and attended our meetings, and his doing so was taken as a matter of course ; he himself was the last person to do anything that bordered on inconvenience or impropriety. But it would be out of the question for a Home Secretary to sit on a Railway Board to-day. In 1902, not long after his retirement from the Government, Lord Ridley (as he had then been made) became Chairman

of the North-Eastern Railway. He died suddenly in 1904—a great loss to our district, for he was a man of ability, whom everyone trusted. I was chosen to succeed him. The year 1905 was one of the happiest of my life ; the work of Chairman of the Railway was agreeable and interesting, but it left in those days plenty of leisure. There were many days spent at home, in the Itchen Valley, or in Scotland. If only I could be free altogether from politics, there was the prospect of permanent and interesting work with income sufficient for all we needed, and a more constant home and country life than we had yet enjoyed. Life, which had been very pleasant since 1895, promised to become more pleasant and settled still. It was not to be.

## CHAPTER V

### BACK TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE

Balfour's Resignation—Campbell-Bannerman's Government—Difficulties in joining it—An Interview with the Prime Minister—Reasons for coming in—Back to the Foreign Office—The Importance of Free Trade—Campbell-Bannerman's Characteristics—The Qualities of a Good Colleague.

IN December 1905 the Unionist Government resigned. The party that supported it was really a Unionist Party in those days, its object being to maintain the Act of Union that united Great Britain and Ireland. By the irony of things that Union was destroyed by a Government of which the majority belonged to the Unionist Party, and the name has now become an anachronism. The party in 1905 was still united on the subject of Ireland, but the energy of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had made Tariff Reform the dominant issue before the country. He had resigned from the Government in 1903 to head a Tariff Reform crusade in which it was understood that he would have the support and sympathy of Mr. Balfour and the Government, which had been purged of its Free Trade Members.



By December 1905 there was every reason for taking the opinion of the electors. For ten years there had been no General Election except that of 1900, which had been taken in the middle of the South African War, and was therefore no opportunity for the expression of popular opinion on anything else except the war. Tariff Reform was a new issue: it had now been debated before the country for over two years. It was therefore altogether reasonable, right, and proper that there should now be a dissolution and a General Election. But there was no apparent reason why Mr. Balfour's Government should have resigned: they had a good majority in Parliament; it was more than two years since the Free Trade Members of the Government had resigned; the shock of that had not broken up the Government then and could not be the cause of its resignation now. The only conceivable reason was that the Government were exhausted and tired—not a good recommendation for giving them support at the polls. There is no doubt that this resignation was a great tactical disadvantage to them.

Campbell-Bannerman was, as leader of the Opposition, invited by the King to form a Government. The Liberal and Irish parties together were in a minority in Parliament; it was clearly impossible for a Liberal Govern-

ment to meet the House of Commons as it then was, and Campbell-Bannerman undertook to form a Government on condition that there was an immediate dissolution of Parliament.

He had no difficulty in forming a Government, but I made difficulty for some days about joining it. I was closely associated with Asquith and Haldane in House of Commons work, and our view was that, with Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister, the leadership in the Commons should be in Asquith's hands. There had not been differences about foreign policy, but there had been about Imperial affairs such as the South African War and the Soudan, and my view was that Asquith would be the more robust and stronger leader in policy and debate in the Commons. I explained this with some frankness to Campbell-Bannerman; I had no feeling but one of liking for him personally, and I wanted him to know just where I stood, and to feel that I was not suppressing in his presence things that I had said about him elsewhere. Perhaps it was some understanding of this that made him take all I said in good part. Asquith had from the first been prepared to take office. Arthur Acland, who had retired from public life, but with whom I had worked closely and intimately in past years, had a long talk with me. Haldane

decided to go into office; there were no substantial reasons for standing out alone, and, as Campbell-Bannerman still offered it, I went to the Foreign Office.

It will be understood from what has been said in the last chapter that the decision brought no joy either to my wife or myself; it meant exile again from home, life in London, and a number of those social functions which Sir George Cornwall Lewis probably had in mind when he said that "life would be tolerable if it were not for its amusements." Probably my wife's comment had much to do with the decision. "If we refuse office," she said, "we cannot justify the decision to the constituents." It was the constituency that had kept us in public life. They had returned me to Parliament at the age of twenty-three, a young and untried man; for twenty years they had continued their confidence, giving me generously freedom to indulge individual views even when these differed from those of the majority of the party. I had not been in a position to spend much money on organization or propaganda; I had indeed paid an agent's fee with other election expenses, but in the years between elections I had, up to 1906, had no paid agent. All the necessary work had been done with the very slender resources of the local association and by voluntary work. As in

most country constituencies, the majority of those who had wealth or large property were on the Conservative side. The Liberal strength lay in the number of devoted men scattered throughout the constituency to whom Liberal politics were a matter of conviction, and to work for the return of a Liberal Member was a matter of conscience. They had done it with the minimum of help from me. Time after time my wife and I had watched the counting of the votes with the feeling that, if I were beaten, our greatest regret would be for the disappointment of those who had worked so hard for a Liberal success: we, too, should have been sorry no doubt on public grounds, but I felt, almost with a sense of guilt, that the relief of being set free from Parliament would be an irresistible joy.

It was for the constituents that we should have minded defeat. My wife had done much to found and encourage Liberal Associations, not so much for party purposes as from a belief that such Associations were good for women. She thought that to take an intelligent interest and an organized part in public affairs broadened outlook and enlarged life. Her views had met with response and co-operation, and she had made many friends. Thus we were conscious of responsibility to a number of earnest people, who had a right

to expect me to do my best in Parliament. It may be added that the home associations of all my life were in the district: this gave a touch of sentiment and intimacy. Ties of sentiment and moral obligation there must be between every member and a constituency that has returned him for twenty years, and in my case these were exceptionally strong and compelling. Now suddenly I was asked to take one of the highest offices in public life, and when my wife said that refusal could not be justified to the constituents, I felt that this was indeed the truest and decisive judgment on the matter.

The other considerations that then seemed important were based upon a mistaken sense of values. I had a notion that the public interest required that every member of the Liberal Party who counted for anything should contribute his help to the Liberal Government. The Tariff Reform issue was a great crisis. I believed that Protection would undermine our Trade; but the weight of the Press was against us. The arguments for Protection are more easily made attractive than those for Free Trade; the issue of the contest seemed doubtful. It was a time when every Free Trader, who might be counted for strength to Campbell-Bannerman's Government, should join it. Such reflections were a consolation after the disagreeable choice of

office was made. The result of the Election, with its enormous and unprecedented Liberal majority, showed what a delusion it had been to suppose that it mattered anything to the cause of Free Trade whether I joined the Government or not : the country had made up its mind that it was tired of the Conservative Government and that it would not have Tariff Reform, and it did not make any difference whether people like myself joined the Government or not.

I had made difficulties, as I now think unnecessarily, about going into office, but when in it I made none. Campbell-Bannerman's leadership in the Commons was accepted, and there was complete loyalty to him. Experience showed that it had been quite unnecessary to raise any question of his leaving the House of Commons. Things went well enough as they were, and the differences and divisions of opinion that had existed when the party was in opposition never reappeared. Campbell-Bannerman's own personality contributed greatly to this result. He provoked no rivalry or ambition in others. It is true that, once installed as leader of the party, he showed a dogged determination to stay there and not to be dislodged from it, but everyone knew that he had never worked to get the leadership or desired it for himself. He had been loyal to previous leaders, and had not

been concerned in the intrigues either for himself or against others. He was a strong party man, but it was for the success of the party, not for his own prestige as its leader, that he cared.

From the moment his Cabinet was formed he made no distinction in personal relations, in intimacy and sympathy between those who had helped him and those who had made difficulties for him when the party was in opposition. He was said to have regarded Haldane as one of those who had worked most actively against his leadership. Haldane was now at the War Office. Campbell-Bannerman's previous experience and knowledge enabled him to give special help to anyone who held that very difficult post, and he gave it unsparingly and whole-heartedly to Haldane. In return, he expected equal loyalty from everyone, and he received it. His personality has been given, more fully and better than I could do it, in Spender's Life of him, but one quality may be mentioned here that he possessed in a peculiar degree. He had an unusually just as well as keen perception of the weaknesses of other men, and it was extraordinarily detached. No personal devotion to himself blunted or dulled the edge of his discerning eye. He was not more conscious of the weak points of his critics than he was of the weak points of his admirers. If he had

taken the trouble to do it, he could probably have given the best and most just criticism of himself. He seemed to have no favourites, not even himself for one. Whether he had an equally keen and just appreciation of excellence is more doubtful; he seemed rather to appreciate freedom from weaknesses that he despised or disliked than to admire positive qualities. He was always ready, however, to give credit for good or successful work done by colleagues without thought of himself. For the two years of his Premiership the Cabinet was peculiarly and happily free from personal differences and restlessness.

Asquith was the only man who could then aspire to succeed to the post of Prime Minister and Asquith was not only free from all self-seeking, but ready, as later experience showed, to carry loyalty to colleagues to the point of generosity and chivalry, if need be. The ambitions of younger men were for the present satisfied by being in a Cabinet for the first time. All of us who had big offices were absorbed in getting to know the work of our Departments and in transacting it.

Reflection has suggested some regret for the personal difficulties made in taking office: on the other hand, it brings the thought that when in office, I was entitled to the support of a good colleague in respect



at any rate, that go to qualify a man for that character.

One of these is to put his mind into the common stock ; to work sincerely in matters of difference of opinion and difficulty for a Cabinet decision. This does not mean that what is regarded by a Minister as vital to the public interest should be compromised. A Minister should resign rather than agree to that. It means that a Minister should not press his personal views unduly about what is not essential, that he should contend for substance, not for form, that he should consider without *amour-propre* how his own opinion can be reconciled with that of others. Subject to the one qualification of not sacrificing what he regards as vital to the public interest, he should not contend for victory, but work for agreement in the Cabinet.

The other qualification is that of accepting full personal responsibility for Cabinet decisions, when once agreed to. Perhaps a third qualification might be mentioned, that of never threatening resignation or talking about it, except in the last resort on a matter of vital importance, and then only when resignation is really intended.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FIRST CRISIS (ALGECIRAS) AND THE MILITARY CONVERSATIONS

The Algeciras Conference—French Apprehensions—Testing the Anglo-French Agreement—A Question for the New Government—The Impossibility of answering it—Interviews with M. Cambon—Military Conversations and their Limitations—An Interview with Metternich—Campbell-Bannerman's View—Ought there to have been a Cabinet?—Preparations and Precautions—Armaments and War—A Later Transaction—The Grey-Cambon Letters of 1912—Endorsement by the Cabinet.

ONE duty of a Cabinet Minister is to make the work of the Department assigned to him the first charge upon his time. The Foreign Office leaves the Secretary of State, who is in charge, of it no choice but to fulfil this duty. The work besets and besieges him. If he gets into arrears he cannot overtake them and also deal with the current work of every day. He is like a man in deep water, who must keep on swimming or be submerged.

On the afternoon of Monday, December 11, 1905, the Liberal Ministers received the seals of office from the King. There was on that afternoon one of the very worst of London fogs: I do not remember whether any sarcastic or ominous comments were made on the coincidence.

I drove to Buckingham Palace in a brougham hired for the occasion, and John Morley, Henry Fowler, and I drove away in it together after receiving our seals. We had got but a little way from the gates when the brougham came to a stand, completely lost in the fog. Thinking I could do better on my feet, I left the brougham ; in a few steps I had lost my way and sense of direction. I walked into the head of a horse, and felt my way along its side, till I found a hansom-cab attached to it. The driver, when asked if he could find his way to Birdcage Walk, said he had just come from it and would try ; he succeeded after some time, and it was then easy to follow the kerb at a foot's pace to the Foreign Office, where I then took over the work.

The Election was already upon us ; the polls were to be held in January ; the campaign of speeches was beginning. I devoted the time before Christmas to the work of the Foreign Office. We spent Sunday the 24th and Christmas with Rosebery at the Durdans. He had often made it clear, after his retirement from leadership of the party in 1900, that the formation of the next Government would be no concern of his : it was therefore the general assumption that he would continue to stand aside, and there had been no surprise at his doing so. But the separation made a great blank, not only to me, but to my wife.

She had always felt that he gave distinction and interest to politics and lifted them out of the drab and commonplace. I was oppressed by the stress of work at the Foreign Office, making myself acquainted with so much that was new or unfamiliar after an absence of ten and a half years ; and before me was the prospect of combining this work with the effort of an election campaign.

The constituency was a large rural area, including the towns of Berwick and Alnwick, and many villages large and small. There was a Conservative opponent addressing meetings, and I had to do the best I could. Relying on the forbearance of constituents and trusting them to make allowance for the strain of Foreign Office work, I arranged to spend three days a week at the Foreign Office. Every Wednesday night I left London, getting home in good time for breakfast ; the last three days of the week were given to election speeches, the paper work of the Foreign Office that followed me being done each morning. Each Sunday night I returned to London and gave the first three days entirely to the Foreign Office. Other Cabinet Ministers were in the same position. It was of course impossible to hold any Cabinets. It was under these conditions that the first critical occasion in foreign policy came upon us.

I have already mentioned how, a few

months before, Germany had forced upon France the dismissal of M. Delcassé, the French Minister who had made the Anglo-French Agreement with Lord Lansdowne in 1904. France, under this pressure, had agreed to an international Conference about Morocco, to be held at Algeciras. Germany had intended thus to shake or to test the strength of the Anglo-French Agreement while the Conservative Government, that had made the Agreement, was in office; she was not likely to be less resolute in that intention now that a Liberal Government had succeeded, which had not been directly responsible for the Agreement.

Campbell-Bannerman, after becoming Prime Minister, had publicly stated his agreement with the main lines of policy followed by Lord Lansdowne; but his Government was not likely to be more stiff or positive than their predecessors. It was therefore certain that the change of Government in Britain could not have dissipated the cloud that was gathering, and that might burst in storm at Algeciras. The date fixed for the meeting of the Conference was not so very far off. French apprehensions were naturally great; it was vital to them to know, before the Conference met, how they stood with regard to British support.

On Wednesday, January 10, M. Paul

Cambon, the French Ambassador, who had returned from Paris with instructions from his Government, put the critical question to me. My record of the conversation is printed in Spender's *Life of Campbell-Bannerman*, but it must have its place also here :

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

*January 10, 1906.*

SIR,—After informing me this afternoon of the nature of the instructions which M. Rouvier was addressing to the French Plenipotentiary at the Conference about to meet at Algeciras on Moorish affairs (as recorded in my immediately preceding despatch), the French Ambassador went on to say that he had spoken to M. Rouvier on the importance of arriving at an understanding as to the course which would be taken by France and Great Britain in the event of the discussions terminating in a rupture between France and Germany. M. Cambon said that he did not believe that the German Emperor desired war, but that His Majesty was pursuing a very dangerous policy. He had succeeded in inciting public opinion and military opinion in Germany, and there was a risk that matters might be brought to a point in which a pacific issue would be difficult. During the previous discussions on the subject of Morocco, Lord Lansdowne had expressed his opinion that the British and French Governments should frankly discuss any eventualities that might seem possible, and by his instructions your Excellency had communicated a Memorandum to M. Delcassé

to the same effect. It had not been considered necessary at the time to discuss the eventuality of war, but it now seemed desirable that this eventuality should also be considered.

M. Cambon said that he had spoken to this effect to M. Rouvier, who agreed in his view. It was not necessary, nor, indeed, expedient that there should be any formal alliance; but it was of great importance that the French Government should know beforehand whether, in the event of aggression against France by Germany, Great Britain would be prepared to render to France armed assistance.

I replied that at the present moment the Prime Minister was out of town, and that the Cabinet were all dispersed seeing after the elections; that we were not as yet aware of the sentiments of the country as they would be expressed at the polls; and that it was impossible therefore for me, in the circumstances, to give a reply to his Excellency's question. I could only state as my personal opinion that, if France were to be attacked by Germany in consequence of a question arising out of the Agreement which our predecessors had recently concluded with the French Government, public opinion in England would be strongly moved in favour of France.

M. Cambon said that he understood this, and that he would repeat his question after the elections.

I said that what Great Britain earnestly desired was that the Conference should have a pacific issue favourable to France.

His Excellency replied that nothing would have a more pacific influence on the Emperor of Germany

than the conviction that, if Germany attacked France, she would find England allied against her.

I said that I thought the German Emperor did believe this, but that it was one thing that his opinion should be held in Germany and another that we should give a positive assurance to France on the subject. There could be no greater mistake than that a Minister should give such an assurance unless he were perfectly certain that it would be fulfilled. I did not believe that any Minister could, in present circumstances, say more than I had done, and, however strong the sympathy of Great Britain might be with France in the case of a rupture with Germany, the expression which might be given to it and the action which might follow must depend largely upon the circumstances in which the rupture took place.

M. Cambon said that he spoke of aggression on the part of Germany, possibly in consequence of some necessary action on the part of France for the protection of her Algerian frontier, or on some other grounds which justified such action.

I said that, as far as a definite promise went I was not in a position to pledge the country to more than neutrality—a benevolent neutrality, if such a thing existed. M. Cambon said that a promise of neutrality did not, of course, satisfy him, and repeated that he would bring the question to me again at the conclusion of the elections.

In the meantime, he thought it advisable that unofficial communications between our Admiralty and War Office and the French Naval and Military Attachés should take place as to what action might advantageously be taken in case the two countries



found themselves in alliance in such a war. Some communications had, he believed, already passed, and might, he thought, be continued. They did not pledge either Government.

I did not dissent from this view.—I am, etc.,

EDWARD GREY.

It was inevitable that the French should ask the question; it was impossible that we should answer it.

I sent the record of the conversation to Campbell-Bannerman and also to Lord Ripon. The latter led the party in the House of Lords. He was a Minister of great experience—he had indeed been a colleague with my grandfather, Sir George Grey, in the last Cabinet of Lord Palmerston in the early sixties of the last century. Soon after we went into office he told me that he knew there were always some Foreign Office papers that were sent to the Prime Minister, and not circulated to the Cabinet, at any rate in the first instance; he asked that these should also be sent to him, as he would have to speak on foreign affairs in the House of Lords. To this I readily agreed, and it was regularly done.

It was not till some time after I entered office that I discovered that, under the threat of German pressure upon France in 1905, steps had been taken to concert military plans, in the event of war being forced upon



the record of the conversation to Campbell-Bannerman and Lord Ripon, I spoke to Haldane, now Secretary of State for War ; he, like myself, was fighting for his seat in the country constituency of East Lothian. We met on one of my election platforms at Berwick, and I took the occasion to tell him of the request for military conversations between British and French military authorities. This despatch to Lord Bertie records the result :

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

*January 15, 1906.*

SIR,—I told M. Cambon to-day that I had communicated to the Prime Minister my account of his conversation with me on the 10th instant. I had heard from the Prime Minister that he could not be in London before January 25, and it would therefore not be possible for me to discuss things with him before then, and the Members of the Government would not assemble in London before the 29th ; I could therefore give no further answer to-day on the question he had addressed to me. He had spoken to me on the 10th of communications passing between the French Naval Attaché and the Admiralty. I understood that these communications had been with Sir John Fisher. If that was so, it was not necessary for me to do any more ; but, with regard to the communications between the French Military Attaché and the War Office, I understood from him that these had taken place

through an intermediary. I had therefore taken the opportunity of speaking to Mr. Haldane, the Secretary of State for War, who had been taking part in my election contest in Northumberland on Friday, and he had authorized me to say that these communications might proceed between the French Military Attaché and General Grierson direct ; but it must be understood that these communications did not commit either Government. M. Cambon said that the intermediary in question had been a retired Colonel, the military correspondent of *The Times*, who, he understood, had been sent from the War Office.—I am, etc.,

EDWARD GREY.

Plans for naval and military co-operation had, I found, begun to be made under Lord Lansdowne in 1905, when the German pressure was menacing. The naval conversations had already been direct ; the military conversations had hitherto been through an intermediary : they, too, were henceforth to be direct. But it was to be clearly understood that these conversations or plans between military or naval staffs did not commit either Government, and involved no promise of support in war. The question that pre-occupied me most anxiously was how to answer M. Cambon's request for a promise of military or naval support if Germany forced war upon France. I knew we could not give it, but what would be the effect of the re-

fusal on France? Would France say that the promise of diplomatic support contained in the Anglo-French Agreement was worth nothing now without a promise to give help in war? Would the French Government go even further, and say that the net result of the Anglo-French Agreement had been to make things worse for France than before, to expose her to a menace from Germany, in face of which diplomatic support alone was useless, and then to leave her in the lurch?

My own opinion—perhaps it would be more accurate to call it an instinctive feeling rather than considered opinion—was, that if Germany forced war on France in order to destroy the Anglo-French Agreement, we ought to go to the help of France. We should be isolated and discredited if we stood aside; hated by those whom we had refused to help, and despised by others. I thought too, that when the time came, if it ever did come, when Germany attacked France, public opinion here would be so moved that Britain would intervene on the side of France. But I was sure that much would depend upon how the war came about. If France appeared to be aggressive Britain would not help her—of that I felt sure—and also that the Cabinet and Parliament would not bind themselves by a promise in advance. Therefore I considered it would be both useless to expect and un-

reasonable for me to ask the Cabinet to authorize me to give any promise. When M. Cambon repeated his question the answer must be that we could give no promise; nothing must be said by me that would entitle the French Government to say that they thought they might count on anything more than diplomatic support. On the other hand, to say that under no circumstances must France even hope for our armed intervention would not be in accordance with British feeling or with the facts. This was the situation that would have to be handled in conversation when M. Cambon repeated his "question" after the Elections were over.

Meanwhile the Election went on. My own poll was declared on Thursday, January 25; the next day my wife and I went to London; thence on Saturday till Monday to Windsor Castle; on Tuesday my wife went to Fallodon, and on Thursday, January 31, the critical conversation with M. Cambon took place. It is recorded in a despatch to Lord Bertie as follows:

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

*January 31, 1906.*

SIR,—The French Ambassador asked me again to-day whether France would be able to count upon

the assistance of England in the event of an attack upon her by Germany.

I said that I had spoken on the subject to the Prime Minister and discussed it with him, and that I had three observations to submit.

In the first place, since the Ambassador had spoken to me a good deal of progress has been made. Our military and naval authorities had been in communication with the French, and I assumed that all preparations were ready, so that, if a crisis arose, no time would have been lost for want of a formal engagement.

In the second place, a week or more before Monsieur Cambon had spoken to me, I had taken an opportunity of expressing to Count Metternich my personal opinion, which I understood Lord Lansdowne had also expressed to him as a personal opinion, that, in the event of an attack upon France by Germany arising out of our Morocco Agreement, public feeling in England would be so strong that no British Government could remain neutral. I urged upon Monsieur Cambon that this, which I had reason to know had been correctly reported at Berlin, had produced there the moral effect which Monsieur Cambon had urged upon me as being one of the great securities of peace and the main reason for a formal engagement between England and France with regard to armed co-operation.

In the third place, I pointed out to Monsieur Cambon that at present French policy in Morocco, within the four corners of the Declaration exchanged between us, was absolutely free, that we did not question it, that we suggested no concessions and no alterations in it, that we left France a free hand

and gave unreservedly our diplomatic support on which she could count ; but that, should our promise extend beyond diplomatic support, and should we make an engagement which might involve us in a war, I was sure my colleagues would say that we must from that time be consulted with regard to French policy in Morocco, and, if need be, be free to press upon the French Government concessions or alterations of their policy which might seem to us desirable to avoid a war.

I asked Monsieur Cambon to weigh these considerations in his mind, and to consider whether the present situation as regards ourselves and France was not so satisfactory that it was unnecessary to alter it by a formal declaration as he desired.

Monsieur Cambon said that in Morocco, if the Conference broke up without favourable result, Germany might place herself behind the Sultan and acquire more and more influence, that trouble might be stirred up on the Algerian frontier, that France might be obliged to take measures to deal with it as she had done before, and that Germany might announce to France, as she had already once done, that an aggression on Morocco would be an attack upon her, and would be replied to accordingly. In such an event war might arise so suddenly that the need for action would be a question not of days, but of minutes, and that, if it was necessary for the British Government to consult, and to wait for manifestations of English public opinion, it might be too late to be of use. He eventually repeated his request for some form of assurance which might be given in conversation. I said that an assurance of that kind could be nothing short of a solemn



undertaking. It was one which I could not give without submitting it to the Cabinet and getting their authority, and that were I to submit the question to the Cabinet I was sure that they would say that this was too serious a matter to be dealt with by a verbal engagement but must be put in writing. As far as their good disposition towards France was concerned, I should have no hesitation in submitting such a question to the present Cabinet. Some of those in the Cabinet who were most attached to peace were those also who were the best friends of France ; but, though I had no doubt about the good disposition of the Cabinet, I did think there would be difficulties in putting such an undertaking in writing. It could not be given unconditionally, and it would be difficult to describe the conditions. It amounted, in fact, to this : that, if any change was made, it must be to change the "Entente" into a defensive alliance. That was a great and formal change, and I again submitted to Monsieur Cambon as to whether the force of circumstances bringing England and France together was not stronger than any assurance in words which could be given at this moment. I said that it might be that the pressure of circumstances—the activity of Germany, for instance—might eventually transform the "Entente" into a defensive alliance between ourselves and France, but I did not think that the pressure of circumstances was so great as to demonstrate the necessity of such a change yet. I told him also that, should such a defensive alliance be formed, it was too serious a matter to be kept secret from Parliament. The Government could conclude it without the assent of Parliament, but

it would have to be published afterwards. No British Government could commit the country to such a serious thing and keep the engagement secret.

Monsieur Cambon, in summing up what I had said, dwelt upon the fact that I had expressed my personal opinion that, in the event of an attack by Germany upon France, no British Government could remain neutral. I said that I had used this expression to Count Metternich first, and not to him, because, supposing it appeared that I had over-estimated the strength of feeling of my countrymen, there could be no disappointment in Germany ; but I could not express so decidedly my personal opinion to France, because a personal opinion was not a thing upon which, in so serious a matter, a policy could be founded. In speaking to him, therefore, I must keep well within the mark. Much would depend as to the manner in which the war broke out between Germany and France. I did not think people in England would be prepared to fight in order to put France in possession of Morocco. They would say that France should wait for opportunities and be content to take time, and that it was unreasonable to hurry matters to the point of war. But if, on the other hand, it appeared that the war was forced upon France by Germany to break up the Anglo-French "Entente," public opinion would undoubtedly be very strong on the side of France. At the same time, Monsieur Cambon must remember that England at the present moment would be most reluctant to find herself engaged in a great war, and I hesitated to express a decided opinion as to whether the strong

feeling of the Press and of public opinion on the side of France would be strong enough to overcome the great reluctance which existed amongst us now to find ourselves involved in war. I asked Monsieur Cambon, however, to bear in mind that, if the French Government desired it, it would be possible at any time to re-open the conversation. Events might change, but, as things were at present, I did not think it was necessary to press the question of a defensive alliance.

Monsieur Cambon said the question was very grave and serious, because the German Emperor had given the French Government to understand that they could not rely upon us, and it was very important to them to feel that they could.—I am, with great truth and respect, sir, Your Excellency's most obedient, humble servant,

E. GREY.

It seems to me now, as it did then, that the line taken in this conversation was the only one that it was possible for a British Minister to take at that time. No one could then have pledged this country in advance to go to war on behalf of France; on the other hand, to say that under no circumstances should we do so would have been untrue and therefore wantonly impolitic. Whether the line taken might have been better expressed or the situation more skilfully handled, is a subsidiary question that may be left to others to judge. I was not confident about that.

My own feeling about it at the time is expressed in a letter that I wrote to my wife the next day. Here is the extract that refers to this conversation: "I had tremendously difficult talk and work yesterday, and very important. I do not know that I did well, but I did honestly." It has been necessary to dwell on this conversation at length, because it defines the position that was maintained up to the very outbreak of war. From time to time the same question was raised, but never did we go a hair's-breadth beyond the position taken in the conversation with M. Cambon on January 31, 1906. In April 1914, at the request of the French, it was agreed to let conversations take place between British and Russian naval authorities, as will be told later on, but it was on the same explicit understanding (recorded by that time in writing in letters exchanged between the French Ambassador and myself in 1912) that no obligation was involved.

The record of the following conversation with the German Ambassador shows what was said to him at this critical time. It contains a statement of what I believed to be the state of British feeling at this period. In this it agrees with what was said to the French Ambassador as to the prospect of our siding with France in the event of war.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir Frank Lascelles*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

January 9, 1906.

SIR,—I told the German Ambassador on the 3rd instant that, since we last had a conversation on the subject, I had been giving further attention to the question of Morocco, and that I felt uneasy as to the situation. I had noticed that a little time ago Prince Bülow had described the question as *très mauvaise*. I had also heard that Lord Lansdowne had said to Count Metternich that, in the event of war between Germany and France, public feeling in England would be such that, in his opinion, it would be impossible for England to remain neutral. Count Metternich said that Lord Lansdowne said that it would be so in the event of an unprovoked attack by Germany on France, and that of course the question of what was unprovoked was one of interpretation.

I said that we did not intend to make trouble at the Morocco Conference. We wanted to avoid trouble between Germany and France, because I really thought that, if there was trouble, we should be involved in it. Public feeling here would be exceedingly strong, not from hostility to Germany, but rather because it had been a great relief and satisfaction to the English public to find themselves on good terms with France, and if France got into difficulties arising out of the very document which had been the foundation of the good feeling between us and France, sympathy with the French would be exceedingly strong.

Count Metternich restated again emphatically the

German point of view, which was that we and the French had no right to dispose of the interests of a third party in Morocco, however we might deal with our own. I said that we had undertaken distinct engagements to give diplomatic support to France for the purposes of the Agreement—the engagements which were published in Article IX. Count Metternich observed that all we had promised was diplomatic support, and that what Germany resented was that public opinion in England spoke as if armed support had been promised. I said that I could only speak on such a matter as a private individual, my opinion being worth no more than that of Lord Lansdowne speaking in the same way, but the opinion was the same. It was not a question of the policy of the Government; what made a nation most likely to take part in war was not policy or interest, but sentiment, and, if the circumstances arose, public feeling in England would be so strong that it would be impossible to be neutral.

Count Metternich said that Germany felt herself too strong a nation and in too strong a position to be overawed by a combination even of two other Great Powers. I said I understood that, but I was speaking frankly now because such a contingency had not arisen, and therefore it was possible now to talk frankly, whereas at a later date, if things became very difficult, he might be much less willing to listen and I might be unable to speak freely. "But," I said, "if things go well at the Morocco Conference, you may be sure of this, that the Anglo-French 'Entente' will not be used afterwards to prejudice the general interests or the policy of Germany. We desire to see France on good terms

with Germany. This is the one thing necessary to complete the comfort of our own friendship with France, and we shall certainly not 'egg on' France at the Conference further than she wishes herself to go." I said this because Count Metternich had told me the other day that he considered that the British Government had been "more French than the French." He said he entirely believed now that we were not more French than the French, and that what I had said represented our real attitude. I said that it really was so, and that our diplomacy was perfectly open and frank. We had gone to a certain point in our engagements with France, from which we could not think of receding. We must keep those engagements, but if the keeping of those engagements proved, at the Conference, to be compatible with Germany's view of her own interests, there would be a sensible amelioration immediately in English public opinion.

We spoke of the tone of the Press both in England and in Germany. Count Metternich complained of a recrudescence of a bad tone in our Press, and its mis-statements. I said that we could not control our Press and that we were not inspiring it, and if I were to say anything in public now to promote a better tone I should at once be told by the Press that this was all very well, but that they must wait till the Morocco Conference took place before they could accept my view. On the other hand, if things went well at the Conference, it would be possible afterwards for anyone in my position to speak in a friendly tone with effect.

We had some conversation on the details of the Conference. Count Metternich said that Germany

could not content herself simply with guarantees for her economic interests, because such guarantees would be worthless if France really had the control of affairs in Morocco. German commerce would then suffer, as foreign commerce had suffered in Tunis and in Madagascar. I said that there were guarantees for the open door in Morocco which did not exist in the cases of Tunis and Madagascar. Count Metternich said that that would not be enough. If French influence was supreme in Morocco, concessions and so forth would be entirely in French hands. I said I understood that there was to be a State Bank for Morocco, and that the French had already agreed to German participation in the Bank, and surely that in itself was a certain guarantee.

Beyond general statements that Germany could not allow France a special position in Morocco, Count Metternich gave me no idea of what the proposals of Germany were likely to be or of her attitude at the Conference.—I am, with great truth and respect, sir, Your Excellency's most obedient, humble servant,

E. GREY.

My object in these interviews was to make the Germans understand that the situation was serious, and let the French feel that we were sympathetic, while carefully avoiding anything that might raise expectations in their minds which this country might not fulfil. To do this it was necessary to avoid bluff in the one case and promises in the other.





Others contend that even the non-committal preparation that we did make was improper and impolitic. These criticisms will all be discussed in later chapters. My chief concern at this point is to state the facts, to make clear what was the position actually taken by us.

Another criticism, not of policy, but of procedure, must be dealt with here. Ought there not to have been a Cabinet, with the whole situation put to it, before my conversation with Cambon on January 31? Campbell-Bannerman, writing to me on January 21, when the Election was in progress, had asked: "When would you like to have a Cabinet? Would 30th, 31st, or 1st do? Would you like the answer to the French to be confirmed by a Cabinet before it is given?" I have no recollection, and no record is found, of my answer to this question. My answer now would be that I ought to have asked for a Cabinet; in after-years, and with more experience, I think there should have been a Cabinet, and I can only say by surmise now why there was not. The answer to be given to Cambon was to commit us to no obligation beyond the diplomatic support to which the Anglo-French Agreement publicly committed us. The earliest date suggested was January 30; probably no earlier date was possible, as the declaration



distinctly the impression that Cambon's manner gave me of his personal opinion in the conversation both of January 10 and January 31. It was that he himself knew that we could not give the promise for which he was instructed to ask; that he had prepared the French Government for a negative answer, but that they had insisted on his putting the question; that he himself considered that the utmost to be expected was that we should agree to the continuance of the naval and military conversations that had been going on, when Lord Lansdowne was at the Foreign Office, with the difference that the military conversations should be direct between the two Staffs, as the naval conversations already were with Sir John Fisher, instead of being carried on through an intermediary. Probably, therefore, Cambon was satisfied. That the French Government was satisfied is not so probable; but more was impossible, and no doubt their Ambassador told them so. The prospects of the Algeciras Conference became less menacing, and the request for more than diplomatic support was not pressed again for some time.

During this critical period a change took place in the Foreign Office. Lord Sanderson, who had been Permanent Under-Secretary for several years, retired, and was succeeded

by Sir Charles Hardinge, British Ambassador at St. Petersburg. Sanderson had become Under-Secretary while I was at the Foreign Office from 1892 to 1895. He welcomed me back in 1905 with a kindness that had a touch of the paternal. Patronizing he never was—he was too modest a man to patronize anyone ; but his long experience and great knowledge gave his opinion weight. He was devoted to the work of the Foreign Office, and lived for it and in it ; he was not prompt to initiate policy, but he was wise in counsel and in advice, and indefatigable in carrying it out, an admirable draftsman of an important despatch, and an altogether most valuable public servant.

At one of the important conversations with Cambon—I suppose the first one, that of January 10—I had asked Sanderson to be present to help me out, if need were, with French. He and I sat side by side on the leather sofa in the room of the Secretary of State : Cambon in an arm-chair opposite to us. The recollection of the whole scene is vivid to me. Cambon proceeded to develop the views of his Government and to put the question asking for a promise of armed help in the event of German aggression. Sanderson felt all the awkwardness of the situation ; he knew the unsettling consequences of not answering the question favourably ; he knew

that it was impossible for me to answer it ; one hand was resting on his knee, and, as Cambon pressed the French view, the hand kept uneasily and restlessly beating up and down upon the knee, a movement of which Anderson no doubt was quite unconscious, but which was eloquent of the entanglement of the moment.

My inability to speak French was happily no drawback in conversation with Cambon.

I could read French easily, but had no practice, and therefore no power of expressing myself in it. Cambon's position respecting English was exactly the same. He understood, but could not speak it. He spoke his own language so distinctly and with such clear pronunciation that every word could be visualized when listening to him. To listen to him was like reading French. Each of us, therefore, spoke his own language, and each understood perfectly. To make sure that we did understand we each exchanged the record that we had made separately and afterwards of one of these early conversations. The comparison of our records left no doubt that each of us had followed every word spoken. From that time we trusted each other completely, and it was never again necessary to compare records to have a third party in the record. O' Ambassadors of the



information of this kind as indicating on the part of Germany not preparations for war, but precautions, which, in view of the state of feeling which existed six months ago, it was quite natural that Germany should take, and which were not the least inconsistent with the pacific intentions which Count Metternich had assured me were hers. "Preparations," I used in the sense of an intention to attack; "precautions," on the other hand, indicated only the intention to defend.

Count Metternich said that France also, according to the statements which Sir Charles Dilke and others had made, had been strengthening her position very much. I said I had no doubt it was true, and that also, in view of the state of feeling which had existed a few months ago, was a perfectly natural precaution for her to take; but I could assure him that as long as I remained at the Foreign Office, or indeed as long as the present Government remained in office, whatever we countenanced would be purely precautions in the sense in which I had used the word, and not aggressive preparations.—I am, etc.,

EDWARD GREY.

This conversation is worth a little reflection. The distinction between preparations made with the intention of going to war and precautions against attack is a true distinction, clear and definite in the mind of those who build up armaments. But it is a distinction that is not obvious or certain to others. Bismarck is reported to have said, in his years



of retirement, that he *made* three wars—the wars being, of course, those against Denmark in 1862, Austria in 1866, and France in 1870. The world knows, from the revelations about the Ems despatch, that the war with France was intended by the German militarists; the German armaments were then a preparation for making war with France, and not simply a precaution against attack by France. Ever since the Bismarckian revelations other countries have been entitled to regard German armaments with special apprehension. It would also follow that Germany would be specially prone to regard the intention of other countries in perfecting armaments as suspect, for we are all disposed to attribute to others motives and views that we have entertained ourselves. Each Government, therefore, while resenting any suggestion that its own measures are anything more than precaution for defence, regards similar measures of another Government as preparation to attack.

The moral is obvious: it is that great armaments lead inevitably to war. If there are armaments on one side there must be armaments on other sides. While one nation arms, other nations cannot tempt it to aggression by remaining defenceless. Armaments must have equipment; armies cannot be of use without strategic railways. Each

measure taken by one nation is noted and leads to counter-measures by others.

The increase of armaments, that is intended in each nation to produce consciousness of strength, and a sense of security, does not produce these effects. On the contrary, it produces a consciousness of the strength of other nations and a sense of fear. Fear begets suspicion and distrust and evil imaginings of all sorts, till each Government feels it would be criminal and a betrayal of its own country not to take every precaution, while every Government regards every precaution of every other Government as evidence of hostile intent. At the date of the conversation with Metternich this reflection upon the situation would have seemed to me a counsel of despair, an unwarranted and culpable pessimism, calculated to precipitate a catastrophe that was not inevitable.

I shall suggest and examine, later on, what more effort could have been made by us to avert war in 1914; I shall explain how it seemed at the time, and still seems true to me, that the military power in Germany chose the time and precipitated the war; and that, had there been a real will for peace in Germany, there would have been no great European War arising out of the Austro-Serbian dispute. But, though all this be true, it is not in my opinion the real and final account of the

origin of the Great War. The enormous growth of armaments in Europe, the sense of insecurity and fear caused by them—it was these that made war inevitable. This, it seems to me, is the truest reading of history, and the lesson that the present should be learning from the past in the interest of future peace, the warning to be handed on to those who come after us.

An illustration of the effect of armaments and precautions on each side of a frontier is to be found in an outburst of the German Emperor to Captain Allenby on January 16, 1906. Here is an extract from Captain Allenby's report of the conversation, giving the words used by the Emperor :—

“ Here France has spent 200,000,000 francs in the last six months in putting her frontier in order, replenishing her ammunition, and repairing the fortresses in preparation for the anticipated incursion of my troops, while I have not moved a single ammunition-wagon.”

It was in the preceding months in 1905 that France had consented, under German pressure, to the humiliation of dismissing M. Delcassé. She had felt compelled to consent because the German armaments were so much more ready for war than her own. The German pressure left her no option but to bring her own forces and equipment up to

date. Yet the effect of her doing so on the mind of the Emperor in 1906 is as obvious and unfavourable as the effect of the German armaments had been on the French mind.

Though it anticipates my narrative, let me conclude the story of the military conversations by briefly relating what took place in subsequent years.

The Algeciras Conference crisis passed; the fact of the military conversations was not at that time made known to the Cabinet generally, but must subsequently have become known to those Ministers who attended the Committee of Imperial Defence. Nothing more respecting it appears in my papers till 1911. In January of that year there seems to have been a Cabinet Committee on Foreign Affairs. It consisted of Asquith, Morley, Lloyd George, Crewe, Haldane, and myself, but I have no recollection of whether this matter of the military conversations came before it.

On April 6, 1911, however, I directed attention to the subject in the following letter to Asquith. The despatch from Bertie to which the letter refers should be in the official archives of the Foreign Office, but search there has not been able to identify it. The letter is taken from a copy found in my private papers.

*April 16, 1911.*

MY DEAR ASQUITH,—Please look at Bertie's despatch of April 13. I have marked it for you, Morley, or Haldane, and I would suggest that, as soon as Haldane returns, that you and Morley should have a talk with him.

Early in 1906 the French said to us, "Will you help us if there is war with Germany?" Will you We said, "We can't promise, our hands must be free."

The French then urged that the military authorities should be allowed to exchange views, ours to say what they could do, the French to say how they would like it done, if we did side with France. Otherwise, as the French urged, even if we decided to support France, on the outbreak of war we shouldn't be able to do it effectively. We agreed to this. Up to this point C.-B., R. B. H., and I were cognizant of what took place—the rest of you were scattered in the Election.

The military experts then conversed. What they settled I never knew—the position being that the Government was quite free, but that the military people knew what to do, if the word was given. Unless French war plans have changed, there should be no need of anything further, but it is clear we are going to be asked something.

Yours sincerely,  
E. G.

In the summer of the same year came the Agadir Crisis. There was apprehension lest it should lead to war between France and

Germany ; there was anxiety in France to know whether, in that event, Britain would give France earnest support. The situation was precisely the same as at the time of the Algeiras Conference ; we could give no pledge. But the military conversations<sup>1</sup> must naturally have been active, and in September Asquith wrote to me as follows :

ARCHERFIELD,  
*September 5, 1911.*

MY DEAR GREY,—Conversations such as that between Gen. Joffre and Col. Fairholme seem to me rather dangerous ; especially the part which refers to possible British assistance. The French ought not to be encouraged, in present circumstances, to make their plans on any assumptions of this kind.

Yours always,  
H. H. A.

To this I replied :

FOREIGN OFFICE,  
*September 8, 1911.*

MY DEAR ASQUITH,—It would create consternation if we forbade our military experts to converse with the French. No doubt these conversations and our speeches have given an expectation of support. I do not see how that can be helped.

<sup>1</sup> These conversations referred to the question whether the Germans would come through Belgium, and to the co-operation of the British Expeditionary Force.

The news to-day is that the Germans are proceeding leisurely with the negotiations, and are shifting the ground from Congo to economic concessions in Morocco. Cambon has just been to see me, and on the whole thinks well of the prospect.

To me it looks as if the negotiations were going to enter upon exceedingly tedious but not dangerous ground.

Yours sincerely,  
E. GREY.

It will be observed that these letters relate, not to a *general* expectation on the part of France that military support would be forthcoming, but to an expectation concerned only with the Agadir Crisis, and founded partly on the speeches we had made in public with reference to that crisis.

The Agadir affair had thus brought the military conversations into prominence. They must have been familiar to several members of the Cabinet in discussion at the Committee of Imperial Defence, and in 1912 the fact of their taking place became known to other members of the Cabinet. Those Ministers who had not been directly informed of them were entitled to know exactly how we stood with the French. There was no reluctance to have the whole matter discussed at the Cabinet. The only difficulty arose from the thing having gone on so long without the Cabinet generally being informed. Ministers

who now heard of these military conversations for the first time suspected that there was something to conceal. If the conversations really did not commit the country, as I stated, why should the knowledge of them have been withheld? There was a demand that the fact of the military conversations being non-committal should be put into writing. I had the impression that some Ministers, who had not been members of the Committee of Defence, expected some demur to this, and were suspiciously surprised at the immediate assent to the proposal given by myself and Asquith. I had made it so plain to Cambon that the Government must remain absolutely free and uncommitted, that I anticipated no difficulty whatever in getting a satisfactory exchange of notes with him on behalf of ourselves and the French Government. I knew he understood and accepted the position, and would make no difficulty; and, if there had been any doubt raised, I was prepared to contend that the military conversations must stop and not be resumed till the condition of them was made clear. I therefore agreed, readily and at once, to the proposal that this condition should be put in writing.

We proceeded to draft the letter in the Cabinet, and again I thought I was conscious of a little surprise that words unqualified and explicit were agreed to. The letter, as



approved by the Cabinet, was signed and given by me to Cambon, and I received one in similar terms from him in exchange. From that time onwards every Minister knew how we stood, and the letters became familiar to the public in 1914, but they may be repeated here :

*Sir Edward Grey to M. Cambon, French Ambassador  
in London*

FOREIGN OFFICE,  
November 22, 1912.

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR,—From time to time in recent years the French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has always been understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force. We have agreed that consultation between experts is not, and ought not to be, regarded as an engagement that commits either Government to action in a contingency that has not arisen and may never arise. The disposition, for instance, of the French and British fleets respectively at the present moment is not based upon an engagement to co-operate in war.

You have, however, pointed out that if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power it might become essential to know whether it could, in that event, depend upon the armed assistance of the other.

I agree that, if either Government had grave

reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and, if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common. If these measures involved action, the plans of the general staffs would at once be taken into consideration, and the Governments would then decide what effect should be given to them.

Yours, etc.,

E. GREY.

*M. Cambon to Sir Edward Grey*

*(Translation)*

FRENCH EMBASSY, LONDON,

November 23, 1912.

DEAR SIR EDWARD,—You reminded me in your letter of yesterday, November 22, that during the last few years the military and naval authorities of France and Great Britain had consulted with each other from time to time; that it had always been understood that these consultations should not restrict the liberty of either Government to decide in the future whether they should lend each other the support of their armed forces; that, on either side, these consultations between experts were not, and should not be, considered as engagements binding our Governments to take action in certain eventualities; that, however, I had remarked to you that, if one or other of the two Governments had grave reason to fear an unprovoked attack on the part of a third Power, it would

become essential to know whether it could count on the armed support of the other.

Your letter answers that point, and I am authorized to state that, in the event of one of our two Governments having grave reason to fear either an act of aggression from a third Power, or some event threatening the general peace, that Government would immediately examine with the other the question whether both Governments should act together in order to prevent the act of aggression or preserve peace. If so, the two Governments would deliberate as to the measures which they would be prepared to take in common ; if those measures involved action, the two Governments would take into immediate consideration the plans of their General Staffs and would then decide as to the effect to be given to those plans.

Yours, etc.,

PAUL CAMBON.

So far as I remember, there was no other matter of importance in foreign affairs that was not within the cognizance of the Cabinet.

I have always regretted, however, that the military conversations were not brought before the Cabinet at once : this would have avoided unnecessary suspicion. But it has also been a great satisfaction to me that they did come before the Cabinet some two years before we were called upon to face the outbreak of war. The Cabinet were wise in having the understanding put into writing

Cambon and the French Government, with their own record of diplomatic conversations before them, would never have disputed the point; but to have it in writing and signed on both sides made it quite clear for public opinion in Britain and in the outside world, when the crisis came in 1914.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ATMOSPHERE OF SUSPICION

Death of Lady Grey—The Algeciras Conference—British Diplomatic Obligations—Mistrust in France—The Testin Case of Casablanca—German Operations in Paris—Ann at St. Petersburg—Reassuring France—The Strengthening of the Entente—A Letter to Campbell-Bannerman—The German Place in the Sun.

THOUGH this narrative is in form autobiographical, it will in substance be confined to what is directly or indirectly relevant to politics, and more especially to foreign policy. Much that would be proper or even essential to autobiography is not touched upon or mentioned at all. I come now to a break in my life too intimate even for autobiography, and yet with such effect on my public work that it must have a place here.

On the afternoon of Thursday, February 1, the day after the critical conversation with Cambon, a telegram was brought to me while I was at the Committee of Imperial Defence; it told that my wife had been thrown from a carriage while driving near Fallodon and was lying unconscious in the village schoolmaster's cottage, close to the place of the accident. I got there that night; she never recovered

consciousness, and died in the early hours of Sunday, February 4.

It is not possible, in reviewing my work afterwards, to look back and say, "Here, if she had lived, I should have taken another decision," or "There I should have thought or spoken differently." But the effect on my work, though it cannot be defined and weighed, must needs have been very great.

For twenty years I had had the upholding support, inestimable in its value especially to a man in public life, of constant companionship at home with one to whom nothing small or mean was tolerable. I now lived alone; this, in itself, was a change so great that, though it was in private life, it was bound to affect character and public work. To this must be added a further reflection.

Through all our married life I had been in the habit of discussing public affairs and sharing all thoughts with my wife; and she had been interested in discussing these with me. Her interests and outlook on life were wide, and her opinion on what came before her and on all that we talked of was always fresh and independent, sometimes so original as to penetrate to new aspects and throw new light on the subject; never was it commonplace or second-hand, never the outcome of conventional or party or class thought. All this was now withdrawn from me. We had

should be given. About this there was nothing more to be done or thought yet.

But the performance of our obligation to give diplomatic support to France was not hypothetical but actual. The moment was at hand when that obligation must be fulfilled. If it were not fulfilled, then the Entente with France would disappear ; all that had been gained by the Anglo-French Agreement would be lost. We should be back where we had been in 1892-5, constantly on the brink of war with France or Russia or both, and dependent for our diplomatic position in the world on German good-will. My recollection of the discomforts and dangers of that position, when I was inside the Foreign Office in those years, was vivid and disagreeable ; the relief felt at the conclusion of the Anglo-French Agreement was very present to my mind. I was determined not to slip back into the old quaking bog, but to keep on what seemed then the sounder and more wholesome ground. There was no thought, in this, of using our better relations with France or with Russia against Germany ; it was hoped that relations with Germany would improve. Indeed, the experience of present years led some minds in the Foreign Office to consider that our relations with Germany would now be better than they had been, when German diplomacy was thriving, or at any rate looking with satisfac-

tion, on the quarrels of Britain with France and Russia, and exploiting the situation created thereby. From 1886 up to the making of the Anglo-French Agreement in 1904 we had been through a very disagreeable experience ; our diplomatic position had been one of increasing weakness and discomfort, and we were determined not to revert to that position again. So it was that attacks upon the Entente, as the Anglo-French Agreement had now come to be called, tended to confirm rather than to weaken it. It was a matter of interest to preserve it as well as a point of honour to act up to the diplomatic obligations contained in it.

I was not, however, immediately alive to the delicate nature of the situation ; I did not realize the efforts that might be made to induce France to suppose that we should not act up to our obligations, nor how sensitive the French might be on this point and how easily confidence might be shaken. I was soon to be enlightened as to the difficulty of avoiding distrust in France. In diplomacy confidence has very shallow roots, and the Entente with France was still young and untried. The critical moment came very suddenly.

The French contention at the Conference was that the Moroccan ports should be policed with a force under Franco-Spanish



auspices ; the Germans used Austria to put forward a proposal that one port, that of Casablanca, should be an exception to this arrangement. France saw in this proposal a project for injecting other potential influences than that of France and Spain into Morocco : she assumed that Casablanca would become a centre of German political influence—a German port. If this was not the plan, why should Germany be so insistent in making Casablanca an exception to what was good enough for the other Moroccan ports ?

The French considered the matter vital, and were firm in resistance ; the German delegate at Algeciras was equally firm in insistence. Our diplomatic support was pledged to France, and was being given. At this crucial moment, when the tension was at the height, there suddenly was circulated a report that we were going to abandon the French point of view. One version was that Nicolson, the British delegate at Algeciras, had told his German colleague there that France ought to give way. At Algeciras, in Paris, in St. Petersburg, everywhere, we were confronted with this report and with belief in it. The thing came with the suddenness of an air-raid, though that simile was not then available. The first bomb fell on me in the form of a telegram from Bertie that reached me one evening in my room at the House of

should be an Inspector-General from one of the minor States for the police of all the ports, including Casablanca, which would be policed, like the other seven ports, by a force under French or Spanish instructors.

From the condition of public opinion in France in regard to the differences with Germany in the Algeciras Conferences, it was obvious that if His Majesty's Government pressed the French Government to give way to the demands of Germany as to Casablanca a very unfortunate impression would be caused in this country.

On the 13th instant I telegraphed to you some extracts from the *Temps* newspaper stated to be the instructions to the French delegate confirmed by M. Rouvier before quitting office. As to the police, those instructions were stated to be to accept an Inspectorate, provided the police were Franco-Spanish, but on no account to admit that such Inspectorate should become a co-operation, and to refuse categorically to agree that the Inspectors should have the direct command at a port.

On the afternoon of the 14th instant I had the honour to receive your telegram No. 40, stating that, in view of those published instructions, you gathered that the French Government thought it impossible to make the concession as to the Casablanca police required by Germany, and, if so, His Majesty's Government would, of course, support them, that I was to so inform the French Government, and that you would make a communication to that effect to M. Cambon.

I went at once to the Quai d'Orsay and saw M. Louis, the Political Director. He told me that the

writer of the article in the *Temps* had access to good information, and that the extracts to which I had drawn his attention gave the general sense but not the text of the instructions to the French delegate. Those instructions had not, he said, been altered in any way since they were communicated to you a few days ago.

The Government of M. Sarrien, which had just been formed, had in the Ministerial declaration made to Parliament that (14th) afternoon, confirmed the general foreign policy of M. Rouvier's Government, but had not yet sufficient time to study the details of it as regarded Morocco, and M. Bourgeois, who had that very day taken over from M. Rouvier the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, would probably require some twenty-four or forty-eight hours' time before coming to a decision as to what further instructions, if any, should be sent to the French delegate at Algeciras. He would be very grateful for the message from you which I had just read, and which would be communicated without loss of time to M. Bourgeois.

At a party at the German Embassy that (14th) evening I met the Minister of War. He told me that matters were going badly at Algeciras, as it appeared that England was not going to continue her support to France.

I replied that if the French Government were resolved not to accept the Austrian proposal about Casablanca His Majesty's Government would continue to support French views in the Conference as heretofore.

M. Étienne observed that he was glad to hear it, for he had been given to understand that such was

not the case. To this I answered that, by your direction, I had given such an assurance to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

In the middle of the day of the 15th instant M. Crozier, French Minister at Copenhagen, who is an intimate friend of M. Bourgeois, came to see Mr. Lister, whom he knew at Copenhagen. M. Crozier said that he had had a long interview with M. Bourgeois on the 14th instant, and, from what I gathered from the Minister for Foreign Affairs the next evening (15th), he had commissioned M. Crozier to see Mr. Lister. The purport of what M. Crozier said was that several influential and competent members of the French Parliament had, when the Government was being constituted, endeavoured to persuade M. Bourgeois that the policy of England under the Government of His Majesty's present advisers, in view of the change of Government in France, would be to withdraw from any active part in continental politics and to adopt a policy of isolation. They maintained that the advice given to the French delegate at Algeciras by Sir A. Nicolson as to the Austrian police scheme was a first indication of their intention to withdraw as soon as possible from supporting French policy.

M. Crozier stated that M. Bourgeois, not being acquainted with the details of recent events, was in a very anxious state, and could not make up his mind whether to believe or to discredit the representation which had been made to him. When M. Bourgeois commissioned M. Crozier to make this communication to Mr. Lister he had not received your message of the 14th, for which, as I informed you by telegram No. 27 of the 15th instant, he requested me, when

I met him that evening at the Élysée, to thank you most cordially, and to say that it had arrived at a critical moment, was most opportune, and had been made use of with excellent effect. I suppose, from what M. Clemenceau, the new Minister of the Interior, had said to me, which I am about to relate, that M. Bourgeois had in mind some doubting colleagues. M. Clemenceau, with whom I have been acquainted for some time, had paid me a visit late in the afternoon. He professes Anglophil tendencies, and has in his paper, the *Aurore*, been a strong advocate of a policy of intimate relations between France and England.

M. Clemenceau, who was accompanied by the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, said that at the Cabinet Council on the 14th instant doubts had been raised as to the fidelity of England to France. She had been suspected of making some arrangement with Germany behind France's back, and Sir A. Nicolson's advice to the French delegate about Casablanca had been quoted as a proof of it. M. Clemenceau had, he asserted, been the only one at first to combat the supposition. He had said that he was sure that the advice as to Casablanca had been given under a misapprehension. He was glad to find from your message, which had reached M. Bourgeois after the Ministerial Council, that his conviction that England was not going to desert France had been proved to be true.

On the receipt of your telegram of the 16th instant, I called on M. Bourgeois, M. Clemenceau, and M. Étienne. I told them that you had authorized me to say that cordial co-operation with France in all parts of the world is a cardinal point

of British policy, and that there had never been any question on the part of His Majesty's Government of discontinuing their support of France in the questions under discussion at Algeciras. That support had been given throughout the Conference and in every capital of Europe where requisite, and the same course would be continued, if the French Government desired it, and would place reliance in His Majesty's Government.

Sir Arthur Nicolson had given advice freely to M. Revoil in the confident expectation that his French colleague would well understand that the British delegate would continue to support him in the Conference; that in the observations made by you in conversation with the French Ambassador you had spoken in the same expectation, and you had no doubt that M. Cambon so understood and reported them.

M. Bourgeois, M. Clemenceau, and M. Étienne said that they were quite reassured.

M. Bourgeois told me, in the strictest confidence, that the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador had called on him on the 15th instant and asked him unofficially, but no doubt under instructions from his Government, sent with the concurrence of the German Government, whether some means might not be devised to get out of the impasse about Casablanca.

M. Bourgeois had, he said, told Count Khevenhuller that France could not accept the Austrian scheme on that point.

The Ambassador had then enquired whether some compromise might not be come to by which Germany would be compensated for a concession

in regard to the Casablanca police question by some stipulation in regard to the bank.

M. Bourgeois had, he stated, replied that if the Austro-Hungarian Government would suggest at the Conference a scheme for a compromise the French Government would be happy to consider it, and M. Bourgeois is hopeful that some proposal will be made by the Austro-Hungarian Government which may be found acceptable by the French Government.

I have good reason to know that what alarmed the new French Cabinet was that when M. Revoil telegraphed the opinion of Sir Arthur Nicolson in regard to Casablanca he said that he supposed that it represented the views of His Majesty's Government, and denoted a change of policy on their part. The reports from the French Ambassador in London were also considered as indicating a tendency on the part of His Majesty's Government to regard the Austro-German proposals as being great concessions on the part of the German Government, and as such ought to be accepted by the French Government rather than allow the Conference to close without a settlement.

At the same time reports were being spread in Parliamentary circles here that England was likely to come to some arrangement with Germany, or perhaps had already done so. I know that some members of the new Government were disposed to think that there might be truth in this insinuation, and for the following reason: On April 25 last I had, by direction of the Secretary of State, spoken to M. Delcassé on the subject of a desire attributed to Germany to obtain a port on the coast of Morocco

(see my despatch No. 156, Confidential, of April 25), and I had said that if the German Government asked for a port His Majesty's Government would be prepared to join the French Government in offering strong opposition to such a proposal ("Pour s'opposer fortement à une telle proposition"), and then begged that if the question were raised M. Delcassé would give full opportunity to His Majesty's Government to concert with the French Government as to the measures which might be taken to meet it ("les mesures qui pourraient être prises pour aller à l'encontre de cette demande").

The advice given to the French Government that they should in the last resort accept the Austro-German proposal for the police of Casablanca rather than break up the Conference was regarded as inconsistent with the communication to M. Delcassé, which I have quoted, for it is thought here that Casablanca might be converted into a useful port, and in German hands would be a danger to France, and the establishment at that port of a police force under a Swiss Inspector and Swiss instructors would be a step towards its occupation in some form by Germany at the first convenient opportunity, and that it is with such a view that the German Government have persisted in the stipulation that it should not be policed by a force under French or Spanish instructors.

It is unfortunate that Frenchmen of education and position should be found ready to believe imputations against England of bad faith, but the hereditary distrust of our country, which has for so long been a characteristic of the French race, has been ably worked on by persons acting in the



interests of Germany in order to create discord between France and England.—I have, etc.

FRANCIS BERTIE.

There was the same scene at St. Petersburg, and the following letter from Cecil Spring-Rice to the Russian Foreign Minister shows the trouble we had there :

*Mr. Spring-Rice to Count Lamsdorff*

(Personnelle et Confidentielle)

SAINT-PETERSBOURG,

le 4 (17) Mars, 1906.

M. LE COMTE,—Je tiens à faire part à votre Excellence des faits suivants :

L'Ambassadeur d'Allemagne à Londres, en appuyant auprès de Sir Edward Grey la dernière proposition allemande au sujet du Maroc, avait dit que même Sir A. Nicolson, en conversation avec son collègue allemand, avait exprimé l'opinion que la France devrait céder. Sir Edward Grey a tout de suite télégraphié cette information à Sir A. Nicolson, qui a répondu : " Je n'ai dit au Délégué Allemand ni directement ni indirectement que la France devrait céder sur quelque point que ce soit des questions encore en discussion."

En me faisant part de la réponse de Sir A. Nicolson, Sir Edward Grey a ajouté textuellement : " Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique continuera certainement à appuyer la France à la Conférence du Maroc."

J'espère qu'il n'y a pas besoin d'ajouter que

l'Angleterre, comme la Russie, fera tout son possible, dans les limites indiquées, pour faciliter une solution.

J'ai cru utile de communiquer à votre Excellence, à titre privé, le télégramme de Sir Edward Grey, en vue des bruits qui seraient en cours ici au sujet de l'attitude de Sir A. Nicolson à la Conférence, qui ressemblent beaucoup à l'assertion ci-dessus mentionnée.

These reports were attributed to German sources. This did not surprise me, and left me cold. The Germans did not fear our Entente with France, or seriously think it a menace to them, but they disliked it : it had suited them that we should be on bad terms with France ; it did not suit them that there should be an Entente. It was their game to sow distrust, if they could. A poor game, judged by ideal standards, but one that they were to be expected to play. To be surprised that a foreign Government did not raise its foreign policy to an ideal plane was to shut one's eyes to patent facts and practice ; to be indignant about it was to beat the air. The German manœuvres therefore roused in me neither surprise nor indignation. But, if it were the German game to sow distrust between France and ourselves, it was equally clear that our game was to be loyal to each other, and I did resent the levity and ease with which France assumed that we should not play the game. It was diplomatic sup-

188

port only that was in question now, and the very frankness with which we had explained why we could not promise in advance armed support, to which we were not pledged, might have been taken by the French as evidence that we should give the diplomatic support to which we were pledged. How could any good take root in such shifting sands of suspicion and distrust ?

However, the crisis passed ; the Germans gave way about Casablanca, the Algeciras Conference came to a peaceable end, and the Anglo-French Entente survived all the perils of it. The net result of all the German effort, first in 1905, when Lansdowne, the author of the Entente, was still in office, and then in 1906, when a Liberal Government had succeeded, was to make the Entente stronger. We had been forced to contemplate the contingency that the Entente might have to fight for its life ; we had, without making any alliance or new obligation, concerted measures to meet that contingency, if it were suddenly thrust upon us ; and diplomatically the French trusted us more, and not less, after the Algeciras Conference than they had done before it.

As one looks about, and sees all the perils that there were, how little belief nations have in each other, how prone they are to disbelieve and to suspect it, it seems almost a miracle

that the Entente survived. One false step, one indiscreet or incautious word, one necessary word delayed or unspoken at the critical moment, and the result might have been fatal. I was at any rate more alive to the delicacy of the situation at the end of the Conference than I had been at the beginning.

There was more delicate ground to be passed over before this year ended.

The wind of armed German pressure, though it had swept M. Delcassé out of the Foreign Office in 1905, had in the long run only caused France to draw the cloak of the Entente with Britain more closely about her. The sun of German cordiality was now to try what it could do. The sun shone, however, not on Paris, but on London. Friendly visits from German pressmen and from German burgomasters came, and were all well received. This was well enough, but not without anxiety. There was always the risk that these friendly demonstrations, desirable if made without *arrière-pensée*, might be represented and used at Paris to create distrust. My own relations with Count Metternich, the German Ambassador, were frank and cordial, and after the Algeciras Conference was over there was little to cause friction or difficulty in our dealings with the German Government. If the Germans would only let well alone, what was now well would continue and get still better.

Unfortunately, the German Government would try to improve the occasion in ways that made it difficult for us. The following despatch to Paris shows how this was done :

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

July 9, 1906.

SIR,—The French Minister told me to-day that Prince Radolin had been to see M. Bourgeois, and had said to him that an *entente* was proceeding between Germany and England. Prince Radolin wished the French Government to know that this *entente* was in no way intended to impair the relations between France and England, and he hoped, therefore, it would not be disagreeable to France. M. Bourgeois had asked whether Prince Radolin had been instructed by the German Government to make this communication, and had been answered in the affirmative.

The French Minister showed me a note of the conversation which M. Bourgeois had sent him, in which it appeared that Prince Radolin had not actually spoken of an *entente*, but only of a *rapprochement*.

M. Bourgeois had replied that, as regards relations between England and Germany, that it was something with which it was not for the French Government to interfere, and that, on the general question of understandings which were intended to make for peace, M. Bourgeois was of course a friend of peace, and favourably disposed to anything which would promote it.

M. Bourgeois had, however, been surprised at receiving a communication of this kind in such a formal way, and had instructed the French Minister to tell me about it.

I said I was equally surprised that such a communication should have been made by the German Ambassador at Paris on the instructions of the German Government. As a matter of fact, there was nothing in the nature of an *entente* between the two countries, nor was there anything out of which an *entente* might be made. At present, there was nothing to discuss between the two Governments, except the trouble on the German South-West African frontier, an insignificant boundary question in some other part of Africa, and the German Concession in Madeira, as to which I had some time ago explained to the German Ambassador why we opposed it. In fact, I regarded the relations between England and Germany as being now normal, and I saw no reason for saying anything about them.

It would, I thought, be inconvenient for France that we should be on bad terms with Germany, just as it would be inconvenient for us that France should be on bad terms with Germany; for if we were called on to take sides, we must take sides with France, as at Algeciras. As long, however, as Germany kept quiet, there was no reason for trouble and things would go on quietly.

The French Minister asked me whether I thought Prince Radolin's communication was connected with the visit of the King to Germany.

I said the King was going to pass through Germany on his way to Marienbad, and, as the German Emperor was a near relation, the King could not

go through the Emperor's country every year without seeing him. But I did not think this could have been the reason for Prince Radolin's communication. All I could suggest was that a great deal of attention had been paid to us from Germany of late. We had received visits from German burgomasters, German artists, and, lastly, German editors. Many people had attended meetings at which the visitors had been received, and they made very friendly speeches. But, as Germany seemed to be forcing the pace so much, some things had been said in conversation during the German editors' visit to the effect that, if Germany wished any good to come of her being civil to us, she must show some corresponding civility in Paris. I also called the French Minister's attention to what I had said in Parliament to the effect that our good relations with France must not be impaired, and any developments in our foreign policy must be such as not to prejudice them. I did not meet the German editors when they were here. But it was very likely that things of this kind had been said by others who had met them. These things had probably been reported to the German Embassy here, and thence to Berlin, and Prince Radolin's communication might be an outcome of them. Otherwise, I could throw no light whatever on this communication.

The only thing of which the Germans had complained for some time past had been the tone of the English Press. We had always answered this complaint by pointing out that the German Press was at least as bad. There had lately been a tendency on the part of the Press of both countries to write

in a better tone about each other, or to leave each other alone, and that was the only thing that had so far happened in the form of a *rapprochement*.

There was nothing new proceeding between the two Governments.

I think it desirable that you should explain this in conversation to M. Bourgeois, and should assure him that we have said nothing hitherto to him about our relations with Germany because there is nothing to tell, and my statement in Parliament was intended to convey that civilities and hospitality, which are promoted here by independent persons in no way connected with the Government, do not imply any present or future change of policy.—I am, etc.,

EDWARD GREY.

The effect of such a step taken by the German Government at Paris was obvious. My desire was that things should go well in relations with Germany, but, to avoid distrust, it was necessary to keep French Ministers informed so that they might know certainly that nothing was being done by us that meant a change of policy or a double policy. The effect of the German communication at Paris must inevitably be to make the French Government suspect that something was going on behind their backs, in which we were concerned, and which I was keeping from them.

Later in the summer King Edward went to Marienbad, and on his journey very



naturally saw the German Emperor. Haldane, our Minister for War, was also on the Continent, and was invited and went to Berlin. On such occasions it was explained to the French that they must not suppose that these friendly visits had any new political significance. We should enter into no engagements that were inconsistent with the Entente, and France must realize that, as long as this condition was observed, it was to her interest that our relations with Germany should be good. One difficult moment there was when it was discovered that the invitation to Haldane was for a date that coincided with the anniversary of the battle of Sedan and would entail his presence at the commemoration of that event. This incidental fact had not been mentioned by the Germans when the invitation was given ; when it was discovered, arrangements were made to avoid any appearance of an anti-French character in the visit, and it took place without any of the untoward results that had been apprehended in the Foreign Office. This was not the last of delicate incidents of the kind. One by one, they had to be negotiated and adjusted as they arose. When one looks back on them, they produce a sense of distaste and weariness.

How much and how little I then understood of this whole situation appears in the

following letter written to Campbell-Bannerman on January 9 :

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

January 9, 1906.

MY DEAR SIR HENRY,—It is unfortunate that the Election clashes with the approach and meeting of the Morocco Conference, for I should like to have been in more frequent communication with you. But this cannot be helped. All that was passed has been sent to you, but I may sum it up as follows :

With the French, matters stand as Lord Lansdowne left them. I have promised diplomatic support in accordance with Article IX, and have let it be known at Madrid and Rome that we shall give this. I have not said a word of anything more, and the French have asked no inconvenient questions.

To the German Ambassador here I have given it as a personal opinion that feeling in England and sympathy for France, if she got into trouble over the document which originated our friendship with her, would be so strong that it would be impossible for any Government to remain neutral. (In margin : "Lansdowne, I find, had also said as much.")

But on behalf of the Government I have said that we shall not use the Anglo-French Entente against German policy or interests ; that though at the Conference we must keep our public engagement to France, we shall not egg on France against Germany ; and that if things go smoothly at the Conference it will be possible to use our influence with effect to ameliorate the tone of the Press and public

opinion here respecting Germany. Also that we wish to improve relations between France and Germany.

In more than one part of the world I find signs that Germany is feeling after a coaling station or a port. Everywhere we block this. I am not an expert in naval strategy, but I doubt whether it is important to us to prevent Germany getting ports at a distance from her base ; and the moment may come when a timely admission that it is not a cardinal object of British policy to prevent her having such a port may have a great pacific effect. It may, for instance, turn out that a port for Germany on the west Atlantic coast of Morocco would solve all the difficulties of the Morocco Conference and be regarded by the French as a means of obtaining the recognition which they want in Morocco without prejudicing their interests in the long run. I cannot yet say that this is likely to be so, but in view of possibilities I should like to know what is the real opinion of the Admiralty or Defence Committee on such a point. The concession of a port to Germany is a card which might any day take a valuable trick in diplomacy, and the S. of S. for Foreign Affairs ought to know whether it is a card which it is not inconsistent with British interests for him to play. Hitherto it has been assumed that all the efforts of British diplomacy must be used to prevent Germany getting a port anywhere.

Indications keep trickling in that Germany is preparing for war in the spring ; France is very apprehensive. I do not think there will be war : I believe the steps taken imply precautions, but not intentions. But the War Office ought, it seems to

me, to be ready to answer the question, what could they do if we had to take part against Germany, if, for instance, the neutrality of Belgium was violated. Fisher, of course, is prepared to answer the question for the Admiralty at any moment, but that only means driving the German fleet to anchor in Kiel and stay there.

At present I am in no difficulty as to what to say or do, but I am apprehensive of what may happen at the Conference when I may have to ask for a decision at a critical moment.

Yours sincerely,  
E. GREY.

In the press of after-events this letter had passed entirely from my mind, till it was found in searching among private papers left at the Foreign Office for documents relating to this period. That the possibility of ceding a port to Germany on the west coast of Morocco should ever have been mentioned is evidence of how little I was aware of the pitfalls and quaking grounds about me; and also of what was real and actual. I was unaware, when writing the letter, that Lord Lansdowne had in the previous year, when the French were giving way temporarily under German pressure, urged them on no account to concede a port in Morocco to Germany. Lansdowne presumably was acting on strong naval opinion. This was before the development of submarine warfare and

198

mines laid by submarines, and I thought the view tenable that ports and other possessions scattered over the world were at the mercy of the Power that had command of the sea. We were that Power, and German ports and colonies abroad were hostages for us to take. In any event, the idea of a port for Germany would not have been mooted till it had first been discussed at the Committee of Imperial Defence, and there it would have been vetoed and died. It would, therefore, never have been mentioned by me to the French ; but what I evidently did not realize, when this letter was written, was that to mention it to the French would have been fatal to the Entente. The mere suggestion of yielding to Germany a port in Morocco would have shaken their confidence in our diplomatic support, and that confidence would never have revived.

To discuss anything, however delicate and tentative, with a Prime Minister is natural and proper. There are two persons with whom a Minister ought to be able to toss his thoughts of policy, however tentatively ; one is his chief private secretary, and the other is the Prime Minister. If he feels that he cannot safely do that he cannot be comfortable while being served by the one or serving under the other.

I refer to this letter, however, not merely

for its bearing on the immediate question of a port in Morocco, but for the general line of policy sketched in it.

Just as the conversation with Cambon of January 31 lays down the lines of our relations with France, so this letter to Campbell-Bannerman explains the parallel lines of our relations to Germany. It will be observed that I told Metternich that, in the event of France getting into trouble because of the Entente, public feeling would be so strong in sympathy for France that the British Government could not remain neutral. I could give this only as a personal opinion; but it was stated again and again, notably in the Agadir Crisis in 1911. It was a warning given in a way that could not be offensive, but was very serious.

The next point to be noted is that the Entente with France was not to be used against German policy or interests. This attitude, too, endured to the end. France was fully aware that no aggression on Germany would receive any countenance from us; in 1911, in the Agadir Crisis, while supporting France diplomatically, as we were bound to do about Morocco, we let it be understood that we regarded with good-will the negotiations on which France entered to give Germany some satisfaction elsewhere.

The third point of interest is the discomfort

in my mind of finding us somehow engaged in blocking Germany's projects in other parts of the world. We were bound to oppose her plans, where they were inimical or dangerous to British interests, but was it necessary to assume that everything everywhere that Germany wanted was dangerous to us? On these lines my thoughts continued to run, but in effect there were only two matters of real importance to Germany that it lay with us to facilitate. One was Walfisch Bay, the only possible harbour for German South-West Africa. About this we could do nothing; it belonged to South Africa, and, though it was surrounded by German territory, the Government of South Africa would never dream of parting with it. The other, and chief matter of importance to Germany, was the Bagdad Railway; and about that we did eventually come to an agreement, as will be explained at the proper time.

There was much vague talk in Germany about "a place in the sun," and some equally vague sympathy in England with that aspiration of Germany. But if by a place in the sun tropical Africa was meant, Germany already had her place in South-West Africa, East Africa, and Cameroons and Togoland. A place in the sun was not what Germany wanted. The tropics do not provide an outlet for a white race. What Germany really

wanted was a place in a temperate climate and a fertile land, which could be peopled by her white population and be German, part of the German Empire and under the German flag. We had no such place to offer; South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, North and South America, all the temperate lands of the world not populated or over-populated by yellow races, were taken up by and belonged to white races, who were in possession of them. Germans could go there and did go, notably to the United States; but they had to become one with the other white inhabitants and accept the separate Government of those countries, if they wished to share in the possession of them. These were the inexorable facts of the situation, and if the talk about a "place in the sun" was translated into terms of practical application and of fact, it became two things—Walfisch Bay and the Bagdad Railway.

#### NOTE TO CHAPTER VII

In 1910, four years after the Algeciras Conference, I had a long talk in England, on various matters of interest, with Theodore Roosevelt. In the course of our talk he introduced the subject of the Algeciras Conference, and told me that he believed his own action had had great if not decisive influence in making Germany give way about the port of Casablanca. What he told me of his communications



with the German Emperor supported this view. I do not know what record he kept of those communications, or even whether they still exist, and I shall not therefore say more about them. The fact, however, that Roosevelt believed, and from what he told me had reason to believe, that the part he took influenced a peaceful solution should be on record and is of interest.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AKABA AND DENSHAWAI

The Sultan and the Sinai Peninsula—His Claim to the Gulf of Akaba—Inviting an Ultimatum—Cromer and the Oriental Mind—The Disturbance of "Beech Sunday"—The Situation in Constantinople—Predominance of German Influence and how obtained—A Cynical Policy—The Denshawai Incident—A Difficult Decision—Lord Cromer's Opinion—Life in London and the Country.

SOME other subjects must be mentioned, though they are not landmarks in the course of British policy, and though they do not directly affect the progress of the main issue.

Early in 1906 the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, demanded that Egyptian troops should be withdrawn from certain places in the Sinai Peninsula, and Turkish troops occupied certain posts in that peninsula. The Turks also demanded that Egyptian troops should be withdrawn from the island of Tiran, the only good anchorage in Gulf of Akaba.

The question of right to these places depended on long usage, confirmed by a telegram from the Grand Vizier at Constantinople on April 8, 1892. This was understood to give the Khedive the right to administer the Sinai Peninsula in the same manner as his father and grandfather had done before him.

The Turkish action was a gratuitous disturbance of this long-standing arrangement.

On the question of substance and importance this extract from a Foreign Office summary gives Lord Cromer's view :

Lord Cromer pointed out the danger underlying the Turkish demands. The construction of a railway down to the bank of the Suez Canal could not but be regarded as a menace to the liberty of Egypt and to freedom of transit through the Canal. The proposed line cutting the Suez Peninsula in half would also have the effect of rendering the Gulf of Akaba more available for torpedo-boats, which would lie on the flank of the route to India and within easy striking distance of that route: the Turkish frontier would also be brought within 100 miles of the Suez Canal and close to the town of Nekl, a place of much strategical importance; and a number of Arab tribes hitherto from time immemorial under the Egyptian Government would be handed over to the Turkish Authorities.

It is not worth while now to explain the geographical details of the Turkish demand to which Lord Cromer referred; the extract given will show that substantial importance attached to them both in the interest of Britain and of Egypt. A Joint Commission for delimiting the frontier was proposed to the Sultan, but he would have none of it.

The Khedive suggested that the telegram

of April 8, 1892, should be taken as the basis of settlement, and that the line of frontier should run from Rafeh to a point on the coast three miles west of Fort Akaba.

The reply of the Grand Vizier is described in the following extract from the Foreign Office summary at the time ; it was to this effect :

(1) That the Gulf of Akaba and the Sinai Peninsula were outside the territory defined in the Imperial Firman.

(2) That the telegram of April 8, 1892, only referred to the western side of the Sinai Peninsula.

(3) That the interpretation of that telegram was a matter which only concerned the Imperial Government.

And so on. Finally the hope was expressed that no occasion would be afforded for interference.

The summary already quoted continues as follows :

The form of the Turkish reply was unusual, both on account of the uncompromising tone and the omission of the usual terms of courtesy.

Lord Cromer said that the Khedive did not propose to send any reply. Two points were, he added, clear from this telegram. One was that the Sultan considered himself entirely free to interpret the telegram of April 8, 1892, in whatever manner he wished. The other was that he, at the least, laid

claim to the whole of the western shore of the Gulf of Akaba and to a large portion of the Sinai Peninsula. The question, therefore, was not merely whether there should be any minor rectification of frontier, but whether the Turks should be put in a position which would enable them to be a standing menace both to the freedom of the Suez Canal and to the liberties of Egypt.

It was evident that Abdul Hamid wanted an ultimatum ; why he had raised the question at all I could not imagine, unless it were from the Turkish passion for reopening questions for the sake of the manœuvring that ensues. Unless Abdul Hamid intended a serious encroachment on Egypt it was not worth his while to trouble the Sinai Peninsula at all ; if he did intend serious encroachment, he must have known that we should take it seriously, and that he would have to give way.

I once heard Lord Cromer describe the impossibility of understanding the Turkish oriental mind. I am not sure that I recall quite accurately what he said, but it was to this effect.

If it is important to you to know what an Oriental is going to do you must ask yourself three questions : (1) What would you yourself do under the same conditions ? (2) What do you think the wisest man you know would do ? (3) What do you think the Oriental

will do? When you have answered these questions you will know three things that the Oriental certainly will not do. Nearer to his intention than that you cannot get.

Why Abdul Hamid should have desired an ultimatum was beyond the reach of speculation, but, as he evidently did desire it, he had to be humoured and an ultimatum was sent. A ship had already been sent to the Gulf of Akaba, and now the Mediterranean Fleet was moved eastwards and preparations made for coercive measures at the expiry of a ten-day ultimatum.

On the tenth day Abdul Hamid gave way, and finally a note was sent to the British Ambassador at Constantinople to say that the Porte did not question the telegram of April 8, 1892; that a Joint Commission would be appointed to fix boundaries so as to secure the maintenance of the *status quo* on the lines of this telegram; and that the boundary should run from Rafeh approximately straight to a point not less than three miles from Akaba.

The danger to Egypt which was revealed in the Great War is complete justification for the firmness which was displayed on this occasion by the British Government.

So the incident ended—a very tedious affair that had dragged on from January to May. There are generally some small points

that bring a touch of humour even into negotiations like those with Abdul Hamid.

It has been mentioned that the line of boundary proposed by the British and Egyptian Governments was to run from a place called Rafeh approximately in a straight line to near Akaba. This line would not prejudice or indeed affect Turkish interests, and it was impossible to divine why Abdul Hamid was so intractable about it. One suggestion made to account for his obstinacy was that he had in his mind confused Rafeh with Jafeh. The latter name suggests Jaffa. Jaffa was far away from any boundary that Egypt ever would claim or had dreamt of claiming. To have mentioned Jaffa in this connexion would have been a preposterous aggression on Turkey. I did not credit the suggestion that Abdul Hamid had really mistaken Rafeh for Jaffa, but the notion that such a confusion in his mind was possible, and that the whole trouble that had lasted for months could have been cleared up at any moment by a conversation over a map, had an element of comedy. Perhaps, however, Abdul Hamid did not believe in maps, and would have regarded any map presented to him as something designed and drawn to deceive.

Another aspect of the Akaba trouble was peculiar and personal: I hesitate to describe it lest it should seem too trivial. It needs a

digression that, to begin with, must seem quite irrelevant. The serious student of foreign policy had best perhaps pass over it unread.

There are a few days in the first part of May when the beech-trees in young leaf give an aspect of light and tender beauty to English country which is well known but indescribable. The days are very few; the colour of the leaves soon darkens, their texture becomes stiffer; beautiful they are still, but "the glory and the dream" are gone. Unless Whitsuntide is unusually early, Sundays in the first half of May are the only days on which those who have business in towns can be sure of a whole day spent in the country at leisure. The first Sunday in May was a little too early for the perfection of the beeches in the country round my Hampshire cottage; the second Sunday in May was the perfect day. In my calendar it was known as "Beech Sunday," a day set apart and consecrated to enjoyment of the beauty of beech-leaves and to thankfulness for it. It was my habit on that morning, each year, to bicycle to a beech-wood some nine miles from the cottage. There I lunched once every year on that day at the foot of a certain tree. The wood was entirely of beech; the trees standing far apart, the grey boles grew up straight and clear and smooth for some dis-



tance above the ground. High overhead the branches touched and made a canopy ; the blue sky just visible here and there ; the sunshine coming through the tender, light-green leaves ; a breeze stirring them now and then, but very gently,—such was the vision of what I had seen and known year by year that was present to me in the Foreign Office in the second week of May. I thought of it, looked forward to it, counted upon it.

The ultimatum had been delivered on May 3, it was to expire on Sunday, May 13. As the second week of May was passing and no answer came from Constantinople, it became evident that Abdul Hamid would not forgo one day of the precious ultimatum. As the hours of Saturday passed, someone in the Foreign Office, probably Eldon Gorst, with special knowledge of Turkish ways, assured me casually and confidently that Abdul Hamid would certainly give way, but that he certainly would not do so till the last day.

When the answer arrived, on the last day, a decision would have to be taken at once as to whether it was satisfactory or not. If the ultimatum expired with no answer or with an unsatisfactory answer received, the Mediterranean Fleet must be instructed to act. I must therefore be on the spot in London on the last day. As this became clear to me I expressed my feelings to one of the high

authorities in the Foreign Office ; he listened civilly, but, as was told me years afterwards, expressed outside my room astonishment that was scornful.

On the morning of Sunday, May 13, Charles Hardinge and Eldon Gorst came to my house in Queen Anne's Gate to await the Turkish answer and to consult. About midday it came ; it was completely satisfactory ; Hardinge and Gorst went their ways. I took a train into Surrey and walked through some good country that I knew and so to Guildford and back to London to be ready for the coming week of office and political work on Monday.

I remained, so far as ultimatums to Turkey were concerned, a sadder and a wiser man. This ultimatum had been necessary, but it was the outcome of a long-drawn-out dispute, and there had been no need to choose even a particular week, still less a Sunday, for its last day. I had now to wait another twelve months to see the great beech-wood as I knew it in its greatest beauty.

The question has already been asked, " Why did Abdul Hamid raise this question at all, and why was he so obstinate about it ? " The obvious answer was suggested at the time : that he acted on German instigation. It seems improbable to me that this was so. The Algeciras Conference was peaceably over

long before our ultimatum became necessary, and there was no crisis to make the Germans wish to distract our attention and embarrass us at that particular moment. They did not seriously propose to support Abdul Hamid in this dispute. If they instigated him, it was a policy of mischief so idle and purposeless that I could not credit them with wasting time upon it. The following letter which I wrote to Lascelles, our Ambassador at Berlin, gives the line taken at the time. Nothing occurred later to qualify or change this view of the Akaba affair.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir Frank Lascelles*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON,  
May 1, 1906.

MY DEAR LASCELLES,—I volunteered to Metternich yesterday a statement of how things stood between us and Turkey respecting the Egyptian frontier dispute. I did so on the ground that I did not desire to withhold from him in this matter what I have said to others.

I have done all this as practical proof that, now the Conference is over, we are not working against German interests as such, and do not wish to treat them in a specially frigid or distant way. Whether it has any effect I do not know, but it may be useful to you to know how it was meant.

Metternich complains of my having said that German friendship might be encouraging Turkey: he provoked the remark by a statement that it

was the weakness of Russia which was encouraging the Turks. I have told him that my remark was not meant as a reproach about the Egyptian frontier difficulty, of which we were not talking at the time, and that what I did mean was that the vigorous support given by Germany to the Sultan, e.g. as regards Macedonia, might have led him to presume too far.

As a matter of fact, I do not suppose the German Embassy has done anything in the Egyptian frontier question; but Baron Oppenheim has been very thick with Mukhtar, who has stirred up the agitation in Egypt, which has led to an increase of the garrison; and if his influence with Mukhtar has been used to calm him, it has been singularly unsuccessful.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) E. GREY.

It may be convenient to deal at this point with the diplomatic situation in Turkey. Misgovernment and ill-treatment of Christian minorities in Asia Minor were endemic, outrage and massacre were epidemic; a very brutal outbreak had occurred in 1895 which had shocked Lord Salisbury, and, as we now know from published German documents, had temporarily disgusted the German Emperor. Constantinople was a sort of cockpit of concessionaires competing for commercial openings, especially those in Asia Minor. To obtain concessions diplomatic support was necessary; and, for diplomatic support to be effective, we needed prestige and influence.

Abdul Hamid was an adept at playing off one Government against another ; influence could be acquired at Constantinople at a price. The price was friendship to Adbul Hamid, whatever he might do in Turkey ; never to worry him about Armenian massacres ; to protect him in the Concert of Europe from being worried by other Powers. No British Government could pay this price. Lord Salisbury could not have done it, if he would, and he made it evident, after the horrors of 1895, that he would not, if he could. The German Government and the German Emperor paid the price and got the position that Great Britain had once held at Constantinople. German influence, acquired by complacency to Abdul Hamid and backed by the prestige of German armaments, became dominant at Constantinople. British influence declined. British representations about Armenian massacres made us hated, but not feared. Abdul Hamid knew that without European support we could not go beyond diplomatic worry ; for the Fleet could not interfere in Asia Minor, nor could we act alone in a matter that was of European and not separate British interest without provoking the jealousy and counter-measures of other Powers. Public opinion in Britain demanded that we should make representations ; we did so, to the cost of British material interests in Turkey.

The irony of it all was that little or no good was done. We received some diplomatic support from France and Russia, but always within limits that stopped short of practical results. Russia was not willing to push her championship of Christian minorities to effective lengths, unless she was thereby to get political results favourable to herself, such as the opening of the Straits to Russian ships of war. Her championship of Christians in European Turkey in the seventies of the last century had ended in her being deprived of the fruits of victory over Turkey; and it was British policy that had taken the lead in restricting these fruits. Great Britain no longer supported Turkey, which Lord Salisbury had denounced as "the wrong horse," but was understood to be unwavering in her desire to keep the Straits closed against ships of war. France had her hands full with her own affairs, and could not afford to provoke friction with dreaded Germany over anything in which French interests were not specially concerned; she had trouble and apprehension enough without that. We, as an island Power, could and did take a lead in protesting against Abdul Hamid's doings, but we could not expect, and did not receive, whole-hearted co-operation from continental Powers, who feared a European conflagration unless Germany was whole-heartedly with

us too ; and Germany was Abdul Hamid's friend.

Germany at Constantinople exploited the situation steadily to her own advantage. We sacrificed our influence and material interests in Turkey ; we did indeed keep our hands clean and acquit the national conscience, but to do this without effectively helping the objects of our efforts and our sympathy, the Christian minorities in Turkey, was a very barren and unsatisfying result.

German policy seems to have been based upon a deliberate belief that moral scruples and altruistic motives do not count in international affairs. Germany did not believe that they existed in other nations, and she did not assume them for herself. The highest morality, for a German Government, was the national interest ; this overrode other considerations, and as such she pursued it at Constantinople. Her policy was completely successful ; ours was deadlock and failure. Germany pushed her commercial interests in Turkey ; the wealth of Asia Minor was passing into her hands ; but she gained these advantages by acting on the belief that morals do not count in policy. It was this mistaken view of human affairs between nations that lost her the war. The very principles and views that for so many years seemed an unqualified success in her Eastern policy had

the seeds of destruction in them. Surely the conclusion is irresistible that a policy which rules out all moral purpose except national interest has a fatal lack of what is essential to enduring success.

Those who are so disposed may see, in what is written here, evidence of something that moved us to an anti-German policy. It was not so. The methods by which Germany pushed her policy in Turkey did indeed seem to us cynical, but her success in getting concessions and making Asia Minor a special field for German enterprise we accepted. There was plenty of room in the world for both British and German enterprise. When German trade was good, British trade was good too. It was the great commercial centres of Great Britain that were most pacific and least anti-German up to the very outbreak of the Great War; and on the eve of that war we had completed an agreement with Germany about the Bagdad Railway that would have facilitated, and not hindered, that enterprise in Asia Minor on which she set such store.

One other matter in this year 1906 must be noticed. It had no bearing on or relation directly to foreign policy, but it caused storms in the House of Commons and contributed to the feeling of uneasiness about myself in a section of the Liberal Party. This feeling



had its origin in my association with what was supposed to be a forward foreign policy, when I was Under-Secretary (1892-5), and had been intensified by differences of opinion about the South African War. Such a feeling, once started, is apt to be increased by incidents that, taken by themselves, would not originate it.

The affair now to be related is an illustration of a certain kind of difficulty in which any British Government may at any time be placed in the course of governing an oriental country, where its rule depends on force and on prestige.

On June 13, 1906, some British officers stationed in Egypt were shooting pigeons at the village of Denshawai in the district of Tantah. They were unexpectedly, and, as it seemed at the time, unaccountably attacked by the inhabitants. The attack was violent and brutal: the officers received more or less severe injuries, and one of them, Captain Bull, was found dead with two severe blows on the head a mile and a half from the scene of the assault.

Arrests were made, and a trial was to take place before a tribunal of the highest competence. There was no reason for the Foreign Office to be concerned or to interfere. Lord Cromer himself reported the matter, and left Egypt for his annual holiday before the trial was concluded.

Suddenly I was confronted at the Foreign Office by the following telegram :

*Mr. Findlay to Sir Edward Grey*

(Received June 27)

ALEXANDRIA,

June 27, 1906.

*Telegraphic.*

The Special Tribunal has been engaged during the last three days in trying the case of assault on British officers. News has just arrived that judgment was given this morning. The following are the sentences :

Four of the ringleaders are condemned to death ; two are condemned to penal servitude for life ; one to fifteen years ; six to seven years ; three to one year and fifty lashes ; and five to fifty lashes. The remaining prisoners, to the number of thirty-one, were acquitted. With regard to the prisoners found guilty, the decision of the Court was unanimous. Premeditation and concerted action were clearly established by the evidence, as was also the fact that the blows which he received acted as a contributory cause of the death of Captain Bull. I am informed that any British jury would have found the first six persons guilty of murder. In the case of the four men who are under sentence of death there are no extenuating circumstances ; they were held by the Court to be all equally guilty. The Court expressed its opinion that extreme forbearance and self-restraint characterized the behaviour of the officers. It was only after the latter had given up their guns that the chief attack took place. The

villagers continued it in cold blood, and showed the greatest brutality. Three of the best-known native advocates defended the accused, and were given a full hearing. As laid down in the decree of 1895, the sentences will be executed immediately. After an exhaustive discussion of the whole case with the Regent, I am fully convinced that the evidence entirely justified the sentence.

In reply to a telegram from the Foreign Office the following further telegram was received :

*Mr. Findlay to Sir Edward Grey*  
(Received June 28)

ALEXANDRIA,  
June 28, 1906.

*Telegraphic.*

Following was the composition of the Special Tribunal :

1. Boutros Pasha, Acting Minister of Justice, officiated as President.

2. Mr. Hayter, Acting Judicial Adviser, who was formerly a Judge in the Soudan.

3. Mr. Bond, Vice-President of the Native Court of Appeal, an office practically corresponding to that of Lord Chief Justice, whose capacity and experience are great.

4. Fathi Bey, President of the Cairo Native Tribunal.

5. Colonel Ludlow, officiating Judge Advocate, representing the Army of Occupation. His experi-

ence of Courts Martial is considerable, and he is acquainted with Arabic.

It is specially provided by the Decree of 1895 that immediate execution should be given to the sentences passed by the Special Tribunal (see Lord Cromer's telegram No. 190). Dangerous suspense and excitement would be entailed by delay in all cases such as the present, between which and death sentences in England there is no parallel. The Special Tribunal was instituted as a substitute for courts martial. It merely expedites procedure, every possible security being given to the accused. I am not aware that any other Army of Occupation has ever delegated its powers. The capacity of the members of the Court can be attested to both by Lord Cromer (whose address is 20 Mansfield Street) and Sir E. Gorst.

I am advised that no legal power to interfere with the execution of the decision come to by the Court is possessed either by the Egyptian Government or by His Majesty's Agency. As soon as Lord Cromer applied to the Egyptian Government for the convocation of the Court the matter passed out of our hands.

The execution should be carried out at two o'clock this afternoon on the scene of the outrage. Order will be maintained by troops sent for that purpose, and I submit that any interference on the part of His Majesty's Government is earnestly to be deprecated. In the present state of the country, dangerous results might be brought about by such interference. I am convinced that Lord Cromer would concur in my opinion.

You may be perfectly assured that the Court were

not inspired either by panic or vindictiveness in passing sentence; that the evidence proved pre-meditation and concerted action on the part of the condemned men; that the death of Captain Bull was due to their action; and that they were the principal participators in that action.

The sentences were very severe, startlingly so, and were to be executed immediately. There was no time for a Cabinet, but I consulted Campbell-Bannerman in his room at the House of Commons and we got Asquith to join us. Our decision was that we could not interfere, and the sentences were executed.

They were carried out in public on the spot where the assault had been made.

Full papers were published, and will be found in Egypt No. 3 and No. 4, 1906, presented to Parliament. They leave no doubt that the Tribunal and officials on the spot believed they were acting in accord with justice, and with what order and safety in Egypt required. But the full account of all the circumstances, when published, created a painful impression that the punishment had been excessive. My defence in the House of Commons had been based on the two telegrams quoted above. When the full facts were before me I felt that what had been done was open to question.

Technically there was no right to interfere

with the sentences, but in the last resort the British Government had always the power to intervene—a power, nevertheless, which it was most undesirable to exercise, and which could only have been rightly used in extreme emergency.

Ought we to have interfered, or not ?

The effect of the execution of the sentences was bad in Egypt. It intensified anti-British feeling. The effect at home was also bad. That is true, but it does not answer the question.

Egypt was in a disturbed state. The effect of overriding the decision of the Tribunal would have been incalculable. It would have spread an impression in Egypt that the officials on the spot were not to be supported from home : disorder might have broken loose, severe measures of protection and repression might have become necessary, with loss of life and many untoward results.

The problem confronts the British Government again and again. If officials on the spot commit in good faith an error of judgment, which is worse—to support them or to throw them over ? To uphold the authority on the spot at the cost of making British rule open to reproach, or to override it at the risk of undermining it altogether ? No general answer of universal application can be given. Each case must be judged by itself, but those

who think the question easy to answer can think so only because they do not understand that there is a problem to be solved.

It is interesting to recall Lord Cromer's view of this affair. He came to see me directly he arrived in England, and had heard of the sentences.

He was greatly disturbed ; he realized to the full the bad effect on public opinion. He said that if he had had any notion that such things might happen he would never have left Egypt before the trial was over.

He was very emphatic that it would have been a capital error to overrule the Tribunal when once the sentences had been pronounced, taking very strongly the view that to throw over the authority on the spot would be disastrous, especially in the state of feeling then existing in Egypt. The district of Tantah in particular was a centre of disturbance and crime. British travellers, who go to Egypt and get at the facts, are sometimes astonished at the number of murders in a bad district ; and the men concerned in this affray were notoriously bad characters. Rescission or modification of sentences would, in Lord Cromer's view, have led to worse disasters.

Lord Cromer gave his own surmise of what had been at the bottom of the whole affair.

The pigeons belonged to the villagers ; it

was the custom of British officers to get permission from the Omdeh, the head-man of the village, to shoot the pigeons. For this a sum was paid that made the villagers well content. On these terms shooting had taken place at this very spot before. Lord Cromer's surmise was that the money paid had never reached the owners of the pigeons. They had therefore determined to resist any further shooting and to go for the officers who next attempted it. The Omdeh again gave permission to shoot, and trouble followed. The result, of course, was to put a stop to the practice of pigeon-shooting altogether.

Here it may be convenient, and not out of place, to say something of recreation and home life. Both are sadly curtailed by office. In a normal year, if there be no unusual crisis, Ministers for Foreign Affairs all over Europe get what holiday and change of air they can in the end of the summer. Like many other people, they have to wait till the fresh glory of late spring and early summer is over; then, when the days are getting shorter and the year is beginning to decline, and the air is keen, and birds are in the moult and silent, they retire to the country. At this season, after Parliament adjourned, I used to spend some time at Fallodon. The daily bulk of Foreign Office work was large, but it could



be done at home, with occasional journeys to spend two or three days at the Foreign Office to consult and to keep in personal touch with those in charge there. This stay at Fallodon and two or three short visits to friends for shooting were the recreation of the Parliamentary Recess. In October residence in London again became permanent till Christmas, when there was another opportunity of getting to Fallodon. Hitherto recreation in London had consisted of two games a week of real tennis, generally in the M.C.C. court at Lord's. I saw, however, that it would be impossible to keep the fixed times necessary to play and be in practice for the game, and so it was given up entirely.

Week-ends in spring and summer were spent in the Hampshire cottage, where I would fish for some hours when free on Saturdays and at Whitsuntide. In autumn and winter I found a quiet hotel opening on to a heath in the New Forest. There I could have the same private rooms at the end of each week. On Sunday morning I might start between 11 o'clock and midday, walk off into the Forest, eat my pocket-luncheon in some wild part of it, drop into an inn at Beaulieu, Lyndhurst, or Burley for tea, and thence get back to the hotel on the outskirts of Brockenhurst in the evening, in the dusk in early spring, under moon or stars in winter.

The other hours of the day were available for reading or work. Early on Monday morning I returned to London with all arrears of work done, lungs filled with fresh air, limbs stretched, mind and body refreshed. These week-end expeditions have sometimes, I am told, been questioned, as implying slackness in work; they were, it is true, planned for pleasure and not for duty, but they did in fact suit the work much better than any other way of spending the week-end out of London. The ordinary country-house visit so often means neither work, rest, nor exercise: I made sure of all these, and the anticipation of these weekly escapes kept up my spirits during many weary hours of work in London. So it was till war came, when for months together an hour or two in Richmond Park or Kew Gardens on Sunday afternoon was all that was possible.

If the word "holiday" could be applied to any of the days described above, they would indeed imply a goodly amount of holiday in the years; but for a Cabinet Minister, who is head of a big Department of State, there is no real holiday; the work follows him like his shadow, presses upon him like a perennial stream. Every day given to outdoor pursuit must be paid for by working early and late hours, that day or the next.

For the first two years at the Foreign

1906

AKABA AND DENSHAWAI

Office, 1906 and 1907, no salmon fishing, for which I had a passion, was attempted. After that, for a fortnight each April, a small fishing was rented on a Scottish river; when this eagerly-longed-for time approached it was interfered with or cut short by some exigency of work. In 1909 it was reduced to one day, and after two or three disappointments I felt that the attempt must be abandoned, or someone at least as fit for the responsibility as myself must be found to take my place for the time. John Morley was willing, and for a fortnight in April I had relief, only telegrams and papers of real importance being sent to me, that I might keep in touch. Morley dealt with all the work that was required of the Secretary of State, and had all the papers of the office at his disposal. It was a happy interval, for Morley left me in no doubt that he liked the change of work; indeed, from what I heard from officials at the Foreign Office, he enjoyed it almost as much as I enjoyed the holiday.

## CHAPTER IX

### GERMANY AND THE NORTH SEA

North Sea and Baltic—Negotiating with Germany—French Apprehensions—Lord Ripon's Opinion—Royal Visits—Embarrassments and Suspicions—Self-poisoning in Germany.

IN looking through old papers, it is depressing to read of the distrust and suspicion with which Governments and peoples regarded each other in these years. The impression given is of an atmosphere so miserable and unwholesome that nothing healthy could live in it. Probably it was no worse than it had always been, and it did not seem so bad at the time as it does in retrospect. At the time one incident succeeded another; there were intervals of comparative calm between them. In reading the record the impression is continuous and cumulative. Various negotiations in 1907 and 1908 were an instance of this. There were at least four separate subjects under discussion: a guarantee for Norway, the abrogation of the old treaty under which Britain and France were in effect guarantors that Russia should not fortify the Aaland Islands, the *status quo* in the Baltic, and the *status quo* in the North Sea.

It is not worth while to explain these negotiations. What result they had at the time has been superseded by the war and its consequences. Nor did they have any important influence on the course of events before the war ; but the records about them show how suspicious everyone was. It can at least be claimed for us that we did not, in these affairs, foment suspicion among others nor give just cause for it ourselves, though we did not escape being suspected.

Russia engaged in a separate negotiation with Germany about the Baltic. The effect of this on France appears from the following extracts :

*From Sir F. Bertie to Sir Edward Grey*

*October 31, 1907.*

M. Pichon is getting nervous as to what may be in discussion or have been already settled between Russia and Germany in regard to the Baltic. He asked me yesterday whether I had any information on the subject, and, on my replying in the negative, he said that he could not help suspecting that Germany had either done or was doing something to secure for herself advantages in the Baltic. She had been suspicious of British policy in regard to Norway, attributing to His Majesty's Government the intention, in the event of war, to occupy a Norwegian port as a basis for hostilities with Germany, and she had therefore wished to have the integrity of Norway guaranteed, and both she and

*Sir Edward Grey to Count de Salis*

FOREIGN OFFICE,  
December 9, 1907.

I told Count Metternich to-day that I had not attempted to communicate with the Prime Minister in connexion with the information which he had given me about the Baltic and the North Sea, as I assumed there was no desire to begin negotiations of any kind at this moment.

I had nothing new to say about the Baltic Arrangement. It seemed to me that Germany, Russia, and Sweden were within their rights in coming to an agreement as to the maintenance of the *status quo*. There was nothing in such an arrangement to which we could take exception, and I might tell him, without any *arrière-pensée*, that we did not object to it or regard it as likely to make difficulties between us.

*Mr. Lister to Sir Edward Grey*

PARIS,  
December 11, 1907.

In the course of conversation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs to-day, I alluded to your conversation with M. Cambon on the subject of the Russo-Swedish and Russo-German Arrangements with regard to the Baltic.

M. Pichon said that he felt convinced that the latter went considerably farther than the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Baltic. He hoped, however, very shortly to have more precise informa-

tion on the subject. In any case, he believed that nothing had been signed as yet, and that we were still in time. He did not by any means intend to play the game of Germany by quarrelling with Russia over the matter, but he would not conceal from me that he was much irritated at her action. He could not appreciate too highly, he said, your attitude, which, as usual, had been absolutely loyal throughout, and he realized that the position of England was a delicate one. The position of France was very different, and he was quite determined to speak very clearly to Russia. He was, in fact, actually doing so.

I did not at the time share the French apprehensions about the Russian negotiations with Germany regarding the Baltic, and was disposed to think that the trouble arose from Isvolsky having been the reverse of prompt in keeping the French informed.

On December 4, 1908, Metternich told me that the Emperor was in favour of an arrangement to maintain the *status quo* in the North Sea, to which England, Germany, Denmark, and Holland should be parties.

It was obvious that negotiations without France about the North Sea would cause worse trouble at Paris than negotiations about the Baltic. The following extract from a record of my conversation with Metternich shows the line taken.

*Sir Edward Grey to Count de Salis*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

December 4, 1907.

SIR,—The German Ambassador to-day came to tell me confidentially, by the desire of his Government and of the Emperor, that discussions had been proceeding since the summer between Russia, Germany, and Sweden with a view to the conclusion of an Arrangement respecting the Baltic, similar to that which we had made with Spain about the Mediterranean, for the purpose of agreeing to maintain the *status quo*, a consequence of which would be that the Baltic remained an open sea for navigation.

The Emperor had thought of mentioning the matter to me at Windsor, but he had decided not to do so, because he regarded his visit here as a family affair, during which it might not be suitable to raise political questions, and also because at that time it was not certain that the negotiations were approaching a conclusion. It was considered now, however, that the discussion with Russia was almost ended, though the discussion with Sweden might need some time longer.

The Emperor further wished me to be told that, in his opinion, this Arrangement might with advantage be supplemented by a similar Arrangement with regard to the *status quo* in the North Sea, to which England, Germany, Denmark, and Holland should be parties. Belgium being a neutral State, it was not so appropriate that she should be included.

I first thanked Count Metternich for making the communication to me respecting the Baltic, and



said that, though I could hardly speak officially about it at once, personally I saw in it nothing whatever which could cause difficulties with us. We had no desire except to see the *status quo* preserved, and freedom of navigation. I was very glad the communication had been made to me, as it was always better to know the truth about such matters before one heard of them in an inaccurate form.

I then asked Count Metternich whether the fortification of the Aaland Islands, respecting which we had a Treaty, would be regarded as a disturbance of the *status quo*.

Count Metternich said this was a point of difficulty between Sweden and Russia, though not with Germany. Russia felt that the Aaland Islands offered dangerous facilities for the importation into Finland of arms, etc., in revolutionary times, and she wished to be able to guard against this.

I said Russia had raised the question of the Aaland Islands Treaty in the summer on this ground, but the question had since been dropped.

With regard to the North Sea, the idea was entirely new to me. It was, of course, a thing on which I should have to consult my colleagues before I could say anything.

Count Metternich reminded me that the whole of this communication was made confidentially.

That these apparently innocent and anodyne discussions were not so simple as was supposed appears from the line taken by Lord Ripon. As soon as he saw the record

of the German proposal about the North Sea, he wrote to me about it with lively apprehension. Lord Ripon was no Chauvinist: he was a lover of peace, desiring to avoid quarrels and to be on good terms with all foreign countries. That he should have felt as he did shows the need there was for caution. The correspondence with him was as follows:

*From Lord Ripon to Sir E. Grey*

*December 15, 1907.*

MY DEAR GREY,—I am very much obliged to you for replying so promptly to my letter about the proposed North Sea Convention, and very glad to find that the Germans have agreed to make a communication to France on the subject; this is satisfactory.

No doubt it is desirable to avoid refusing off-hand to consider any proposal emanating from Germany, but, on the other hand, there is a danger of some misunderstanding arising if we enter into negotiations and end by breaking off. But there is no use troubling you further on the matter till we know what the actual proposals of the German Government are. At present it does not seem to me that a North Sea Convention would do us any good, and it might hamper us inconveniently in the future. All that we need in the North Sea is to have our hands quite free as they now are.—Yours sincerely,

RIPON.

*From Sir Edward Grey to Lord Ripon*

*December 13, 1907.*

DEAR LORD RIPON,—I am not sure that Germany has any motive except to show that she is not isolated. She may have intended to separate us and France, but if so that is over, for she has now put the North Sea proposal before France and told her that she has done so because we said that France must be a party. The French Government now know the line we have taken both about the Baltic and the North Sea, and Cambon has been very appreciative of both.

You will see the record of conversations which I had yesterday, and these will further define the line which I have taken.

If Germany is set upon appearing before the world arm-in-arm with us and France, it will not do to affront her by refusing before it is clear that there is something which is objectionable in the proposal. If we did, Germany would have some pretext for saying that we aimed at her isolation.

I hope you will agree with all that has been said so far ; I think it is all in accord with the line you advise.—Yours sincerely,

E. GREY.

Metternich's last conversation seemed to contemplate that Denmark might come into the Baltic Convention : I remarked on her exclusion.

In due course the whole affair was considered by the Cabinet ; the negotiations

proceeded, and the agreement was concluded.

It is not worth while to quote further papers giving the history of the negotiations, which, once started, were concerned with points of detail. An even more fertile source of suspicion were royal visits. These visits were matters of civility and courtesy ; as such their effect was good ; they made a friendly atmosphere. But they caused me the greatest trouble.

In 1907 the German Emperor was to pay a visit to London ; this in itself was well enough, but we heard that he was to come accompanied by a squadron and with such state and circumstance as would turn the visit into a great political demonstration. When this was deprecated he suddenly announced that he could not come at all. The cancellation of the visit would have been a demonstration the other way, equally to be deprecated. That the visit should take place at all was something that must make the French sensitive. That could not be helped. There was no reason why our relations with France should stand in the way of good relations with Germany ; it would have been still more unreasonable to suppose that King Edward and the Emperor were not to meet and to be as intimate as they chose. So the visit took place at Windsor. King Edward also saw the Emperor at Homburg, and paid

him a state visit at Berlin. The Germans would have been very indignant at the suggestion that any other Government should have been sensitive about these visits between the King and Emperor.

But when King Edward visited the Tsar at Reval,<sup>1</sup> and when, in the course of his stay abroad, he saw the Austrian Emperor at Ischl, the Germans were as sensitive as anyone.

Again the King visited the German Emperor at Homburg, and then passed on to Ischl, where he met the Emperor of Austria. One suggestion made in Germany was that he had tried at Ischl to weaken the Triple Alliance.

The idea that King Edward was a busy intriguer who used these visits for political ends, particularly for that of "encircling" Germany, was a fiction, but it became an article of faith in Germany. There is, I believe, a medical term applied to certain unhealthy processes in the human body; it means "Self-poisoning." Some analogous process went on in the German mind about King Edward. It had no origin in truth. My impression was that King Edward enjoyed these visits, and he certainly had no desire to spoil his own part in them by going into deep political waters. He desired to have someone with him to whom he could

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. II, pp. 19-30.

refer any Sovereign or Foreign Minister, who wished to have serious political discussion. For this purpose Hardinge went with him, and acted just as any Ambassador would, reporting his conversations home to the Foreign Office in the usual way. The visits were not made the object of important strokes or developments in foreign policy.

## CHAPTER X

### PERSIA AND RUSSIA

The Necessity of an Understanding with Russia—The Persian Danger-point—"Vive la Douma!"—Benckendorff's Question—An Unfavourable Atmosphere—Sowing Mischief—Gains and Losses of the Persian Agreement—Letters to Nicolson—A Train of Minor Troubles—A Dinner to Isvolsky.

It will be remembered that, when the Conservative Government made their first positive departure from previous policy, it was not in the direction of an understanding with Russia by which differences between that country and Britain should be adjusted by mutual accommodation and agreement. The departure took the form of an alliance with Japan by which Russian advances in the Far East could be controlled. But this arrangement applied only to the Far East. It left other causes of friction untouched, and if the Russian proceedings in the Far East had been the most recent cause of trouble with Russia, they were not the most dangerous, the most long-standing, or the most likely to recur. Russian advances towards the Indian frontier were the most sensitive and dangerous point. If we were to get out of the old, bad rut in which we had so often

come to the verge of war with Russia, we had to work for a definite agreement. Russia was the ally of France ; we could not pursue at one and the same time a policy of agreement with France and a policy of counter-alliances against Russia. Nor was there any third country with interests in the region of the Indian frontier with whom we could concert a policy to control Russian advance. An agreement with Russia was the natural complement of the agreement with France ; it was also the only practical alternative to the old policy of drift, with its continual complaints, bickerings, and dangerous friction. Persia was the danger-point. The inefficiency of Persian Governments, the state of their finances, the internal disorders, not only laid Persia open to foreign interference, but positively invited and attracted it. Teheran, the capital and the seat of the Central Government, was in the north of Persia ; it was within easy striking distance from Russia, it was quite out of British reach. Russia had therefore a great and perpetual advantage in the struggle that went on between British and Russian diplomacy at Teheran. A British Minister many years ago, endeavouring to encourage the Shah to stand up against Russian encroachments, was stopped by the Shah making the sign of a bow-string round his own neck to express the position of Russia



with regard to himself. "What can *you* do?" said the Shah to the British Minister.

It is not suggested that Russian influence at Teheran was pressed with a deliberate design of advance to the Indian frontier; the policy of Russia was decided probably by the momentum of her own weight and by the weakness of Persia; but each new concession or extension of influence increased British apprehension. We feared that we might at any time be confronted by some *fait accompli* which British interests would require us to resist—a situation very unpleasant to contemplate.

British policy in Persia was therefore constantly in opposition to Russia; it was not a forward policy pushed for the purpose of extending British territory or influence. Its object was to keep Persia as a buffer State and to maintain it as an independent country.

It will readily be inferred that the atmosphere at Teheran was one of dislike, and distrust between Britain and Russia; and thus, to the inevitable friction caused by policies that had opposing aims, was added imputation of motive, where perhaps no sinister motive existed, so that even trivial or accidental things were exaggerated into matters of importance and design.

The Persian Government, conscious of its own weakness, considered that its best hope

lay in playing off one Government as far as it could against the other, and maintaining as far as it could an equipoise of bad relations between Britain and Russia.

Such was the situation, and it was very clear that nothing short of a cordial understanding would prevent it from getting worse. Unless the mists of suspicion were dissolved by the warm air of friendship, the increasing friction would cause Britain and Russia to drift towards war.

It was not so easy to create friendship with Russia as with France. Russian despotism was repugnant to British ideals, and something was constantly happening in Russia that alienated British sympathy or stirred indignation.

The institution of a Duma in Russia had done something to make even British Liberals more sympathetic. Representatives of the Duma visited London to take part in a gathering of international Parliamentary Representatives. Campbell-Bannerman was to give an address to the gathering, and the fact that there were Russian Parliamentary Representatives in such an assembly for the first time served to make a friendly reference to Russia by the British Prime Minister exceptionally easy. On the morning of the speech Campbell-Bannerman was confronted by the news that the Tsar had suspended the Duma.

consideration for the feelings of an autocratic Government. Mr. Smeaton wrote to ask my advice as to going with the deputation, and I replied that, as the deputation was entirely unofficial, I could give no advice respecting it.

I also realize that you can do nothing by representation about pogroms, and I shall not ask you to make any, though we may send you from time to time the apprehensions that are expressed here. In some parts of Russia there is apparently civil war, carried on by bombs on one side and pogroms on the other.

The whole course of internal affairs in Russia rendered the atmosphere very unfavourable to friendly negotiations. The treatment of Poles and the treatment of Jews in Russia and kindred matters were often the subject of representations to me, and sometimes of questions in Parliament. Our interference could do no good ; it would only make things worse. A British Government had once addressed some remonstrance to Russia about internal affairs, and the Russian Government had retorted with remarks about the state of Ireland. Nicolson told me that he had once, in friendly and informal talk, spoken to Stolypin, the Russian Minister, who effected a great land reform, about the disabilities of Jews in Russia. Stolypin had replied that he no more approved of these disabilities than British or other foreign critics did, but that,

if he removed them, there would be pogroms all over Russia, which he would not be able to stop.

To add to these difficulties there were attempts to sow suspicion of us in Russia, as the following letter of March 26, 1906, to Spring-Rice (then Chargé d'Affaires at St. Petersburg) shows :

*Sir E. Grey to Mr. C. Spring-Rice*

*March 26, 1906.*

DEAR SPRING-RICE,—Count Benckendorff has given us copies of a number of documents relating to a supposed secret agreement by which England and Japan guarantee the territorial integrity of the possessions of the Sultan of Turkey in Asia Minor, and bind themselves to help the Imperial Ottoman Government by their united forces against any attack upon the Ottoman Empire on the Asiatic side.

The most circumstantial of these documents is a supposed telegram from Musurus Pasha, the Turkish Ambassador in London, to the first Secretary of the Sultan, dated January 29, 1906, in which Musurus states that I have just communicated to him the definitive text of the secret article to the above effect.

No such article exists, there is no secret article or understanding of any kind between us and Japan ; the published alliance contains everything that has been agreed upon between us. The supposed guarantee of Turkey has never been mentioned between us and Japan, nor have we ever mentioned

such a proposal to Musurus or at Constantinople, and we have undertaken no new engagement of any kind with regard to the Turkish Empire. If it is possible to make a denial more categorical than this I am quite ready to do it.

What does interest me is the circumstantial character of the documents that have been supplied to the Russian Government. It has taken some trouble to invent them, and there must have been a strong motive for doing this and conveying them to the Russian Government. But Count Lamsdorff is probably as well, or better, able than I am to guess their origin and motive.

You may give a copy of this letter to Count Lamsdorff.

E. GREY.

*Télégramme de Musurus Pacha au Premier Secrétaire  
du Sultan*

Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères d'Angleterre vient de me communiquer le texte définitif de l'article secret additionnel au traité d'alliance Anglo-Japonais qui a été établi par lui de concert avec l'Ambassadeur du Japon. Je vous transmets la traduction turque de cet article :

" Les Gouvernements de Grande-Bretagne et du Japon, pour compléter les stipulations du traité conclu entre elles le 12 Août, 1905, sont tombés d'accord sur l'article suivant qu'ils prennent l'obligation de tenir strictement secret. Les Gouvernements de Grande-Bretagne et du Japon déclarent qu'ils garantissent l'intégrité territoriale des possessions de Sa Majesté le Sultan en Asia Mineure

et seront tenus de porter secours au Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman par leurs forces réunies contre toute attaque dont l'Empire Ottoman serait l'objet du côté de l'Asie. Cet article additionnel et secret aura la même force et valeur s'il était mot par mot inséré dans le texte du traité susmentionné du 12 Août, 1905, et restera en vigueur pour la même durée."

Les textes Français et Anglais de l'article précité ont été expédiés par l'Ambassadeur Turc à Londres par poste.

I find two comments appended to the copy of this document, which was conveyed to the Prime Minister :

There is a mystery about this affair : I do not believe that Musurus invented this telegram ; but someone has invented it, and given it to the Russians. This is the sort of thing that has gone on for years ; now for the first time the Russians are giving us the opportunity of exposing the lies.

E. G.

This last fact is worth all the lies put together.

H. C.-B.

The last line here printed is Campbell-Bannerman's very apposite comment.

Nevertheless, it remained as essential as ever to come to some understanding with Russia.

Our interests were so important and in

such intimate contact in Asia that, without an understanding, there was bound to be friction increasing to the point of danger—a friction that was an increasing cause of weakness and insecurity to the position of the British Empire.

In 1907 negotiations were seriously taken in hand, and resulted in the "Convention signed on August 31, 1907, between Great Britain and Russia, containing arrangements on the subject of Persia, Afghanistan, and Thibet."

The cardinal British object in these negotiations was to secure ourselves for ever, as far as a treaty could secure us, from further Russian advances in the direction of the Indian frontier. Russia was to cease threatening and annoying British interests concerned with India. This had been a formidable diplomatic weapon in her hands. She was now, once and for all, to give it up. The gain to us was great. We were freed from an anxiety that had often preoccupied British Governments; a frequent source of friction and a possible cause of war was removed; the prospect of peace was made more secure.

What did Russia get in return? On paper it was an equal bargain. The part of Persia by which India could be approached was made secure from Russian penetration. The part of Persia by which Russia could be approached was secured from British penetration. The

gain was equal—on paper. In practice we gave up nothing. We did not wish to pursue a forward policy in Persia ; nor could a British advance in Persia have been the same menace to Russia that a Russian advance in Persia might be to India. It is no wonder that the Russian Foreign Minister had some difficulty in getting military authorities in Russia to give up something of real potential value to them, while we gave up what was of little or no practical value to us.

No attempt was made to include the whole Persian Gulf in the British sphere of interest : Russia had just been excluded from warm water in the Far East as a result of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and it seemed to me unreasonable to try to turn the Anglo-Russian Agreement into an instrument for expressly excluding her from warm water in the Middle East. The Persian Gulf was kept outside her sphere, but left in the "neutral" sphere. Russia gained nothing as regards the Gulf by the Agreement, but her position was not made worse. Even so, the Agreement seemed to me one-sided. What we gained by it was real—what Russia gained was apparent. I remember asking someone in the Foreign Office, who had special knowledge of Russia, whether the Russian Government were really afraid of a British forward policy and designs in Persia. He replied that he thought Russia



1907

PERSIA AND RUSSIA

really did fear them. It was difficult to believe that. I felt sure that, if Russia gave up every movement and every design that might embarrass us in Central Asia, she would sooner or later expect a modification of the British attitude towards her access to warm water. I did not expect her to bother about the Persian Gulf, but I thought it probable that at the first opportunity she would talk to us about the Straits in the Near East.

Private letters of mine to Nicolson, then Ambassador at St. Petersburg, written in November 1906 and April 1907, explain what was in my mind. I give two of them in full, though some sentences are not relevant to the particular point that they are quoted to illustrate :

*Sir E. Grey to Sir A. Nicolson*

FOREIGN OFFICE,  
*November 6, 1906.*

MY DEAR NICOLSON,—In answer to your despatch of November 4, and your private letters on the same subject, I would say that I see no objection to your giving to M. Isvolsky a sketch of an agreement as you propose, and one is being sent in a despatch. You should, however, make it clear to him that it does not pretend to be in treaty form, and is rather in the nature of an *aide-mémoire* of what has been thrown out in conversation.

I do not wish the negotiations to go to sleep. But, on the other hand, we must avoid raising in M. Isvolsky's mind the suspicion that we wish to force the pace in order to take advantage of Russia's present situation.

I should, however, omit the last paragraph from the draft which you propose. It is not essential to an arrangement with Russia that we should each of us become parties to a promise to prevent third Powers from obtaining concessions in the parts of Persia in which we have each of us respectively renounced influence ourselves. It would be enough that we should each agree not to seek or maintain influence in the specified district reserved for the other. After our arrangement with Russia was completed, we could obtain from Persia an undertaking not to make concessions which would have any political character to a third Power in our specified district. Russia could do the same for herself, and it would follow, from the arrangement which we and Russia had made, that neither of us would oppose the other in making these separate arrangements with the Persian Government.

Such a settlement between Russia and us would give absolutely no opportunity or pretext to any other country for saying that the settlement had infringed the principle of the open door.

Of course, I understand M. Isvolsky's difficulty with the military party. Seistan is, no doubt, a place of strategic importance in their eyes. But it is only of such importance if they wish to attack the Indian frontier, or to put pressure upon us by making us think that they intend to attack it. The benefit which we expect from an arrangement

with Russia is that we should be set free from any such apprehension; and this is precisely what we ask in the settlement.

If, as you suppose, M. Isvolsky will say at this point, "But what is Russia to get in return?" you will naturally reply that she gets in a certain specified district the same security that we get in Seistan. He will then probably point out that our gain in this matter is much greater than that of Russia, who is not really disturbed by the apprehension that aggression on our part in the north and north-west of Persia is practicable; and that he must, therefore, have a further *quid pro quo* with which to overcome the opposition of the military party, or at least to convince the Emperor that the opposition of the military party is unreasonable. *But it is for him to say what it is he wants!*

Probably he already has something in his mind, but is hesitating to propose it. I think he should let us know what it is. If it is access to the Persian Gulf, that is a matter which should be referred to us for discussion. But I doubt, myself, whether any complete arrangement with Russia can be made unless it includes the Near East as well. It is the differences in the Near East that have been the original cause of the hostility and friction between Russia and us.

So far as the Russian Government are aware officially our attitude in the Near East has not been changed. But it is not for us to propose changes with regard to the treaty conditions of the Dardanelles. I think some change in the direction desired by Russia would be admissible, and we should be prepared to discuss the question if Russia

introduces it. If M. Isvolsky mentions it you might, therefore, say that it is a matter on which you are at present without instructions to speak to him, but which you will refer home. I enclose for your own information only a departmental memorandum on the Dardanelles. It shows that much may be possible, but it must not be taken yet as committing even me, much less the Cabinet, who have not seen it.

The difficulty is, of course, that the question of the Dardanelles concerns the other Powers of Europe. Our settlement with Russia, when completed, will have to be published, and so important a matter as a promise on our part to give diplomatic support in favour of any modification of a European treaty could not be introduced as a secret article. The fact that this is so makes it proper that M. Isvolsky, and not we, should be the first to mention the matter; it cannot be pressed without raising a European question, which it is Russia's interest, and not ours, to raise, though we might no longer object to seeing it reopened as we should have objected a few years ago.

The sketch of a Persian agreement is founded upon yours, but the preamble was expanded by John Morley, and Hardinge has used the Anglo-Russian China Railway Agreement as a model for the rest, so as to introduce terms already familiar to Russia.

I fear the temporary ascendancy of the reactionary party round the Tsar will not make the atmosphere favourable for these negotiations of ours.

E. G.

*Sir E. Grey to Sir A. Nicolson, St. Petersburg*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

*April 1, 1907.*

MY DEAR NICOLSON,—My days are so full when the House of Commons is sitting that I have not written to you as I intended. I rely upon Hardinge to keep you informed.

You need not fear delay on our side about Afghanistan. I spoke to Morley about it, and when a satisfactory Asiatic Agreement is in shape, I think he will be prepared to agree and to settle with the Amir afterwards, without hanging the whole thing up for communications with the Amir.

It is important that our negotiations should be concluded practically *pari passu* with the Japanese negotiations. I have impressed upon Komura that the two ought now to proceed simultaneously, though there should be nothing tripartite about them.

It would be much better not to bring the Dardanelles and Bosphorus into this Asiatic Agreement, for the reasons I gave in my conversation with Benckendorff. I thought it better to give Benckendorff my record of that conversation, to avoid misunderstandings afterwards. The fact is, that if Asiatic things are settled favourably the Russians will not have trouble with us about the entrance to the Black Sea ; but France, at any rate, must be taken into confidence before we make engagements, and we should expect Russia's support about some Egyptian and other kindred things in the Near East, which matter to us and are not important to her.

The real rock ahead is the prospect in Russia

itself. If the Duma is dissolved, and there is a régime of pogroms and courts martial, feeling here will be very adverse. We could carry a settlement of Asiatic frontier questions in any case, but I don't think we could do more if things were very bad in Russia, for there would be resentment at our choosing this time to make a concession about the Straits. But this would not be the worst consequence of reaction in Russia; the worst is that things would be said in Parliament, and in our Press, which would mightily offend the Tsar and the Russian Government, and might make it impossible for you to make progress at St. Petersburg.

I see no objection to an arbitration agreement of the usual kind, of which we have made so many, being added to any agreement with Russia, if she wishes it; it would be popular here.

I will try to keep the "Knight Commander"<sup>1</sup> case quiet in Parliament for the present, and the other also; but they must go to arbitration eventually, if Russia will not settle them without.—Yours sincerely,

E. GREY.

The question of the Straits was not mixed up with those Anglo-Russian negotiations about Persia. The Agreement was completed and signed in August 1907 without any secret article or secret understanding whatever.

<sup>1</sup> A Liverpool-owned British steamer sunk by a Russian cruiser off Vladivostok in July 1904. The controversy about compensation for her owners and crew lasted till March 1911.

The question of the Straits was, however, raised by Isvolsky, the Russian Foreign Minister, when he came to London in the autumn of 1908, and was then carefully considered by the Government, as will be related in a further chapter.<sup>1</sup>

The following letter from me to Campbell-Bannerman announces the conclusion of the Agreement :

*Sir E. Grey to the Prime Minister*

*August 31, 1907.*

MY DEAR SIR HENRY,—You will have seen, by the telegrams, that the Russian Agreement is being signed. The Russians have eventually accepted the proposal which was agreed upon after consultation between Morley, Ritchie, Nicolson, Hardinge, and myself. Nicolson went back with it to St. Petersburg; Isvolsky would not have it at first, but has eventually found in it a compromise with his own opponents in the Council of Ministers at St. Petersburg.

Nicolson has, as usual, been invaluable, never missing a point, and with excellent judgment. So has Hardinge, with his knowledge both of the Russian Government and of Persia, and his clear view as to the good policy of an agreement.

But without Morley we should have made no progress at all, for the Government of India would have blocked every point and Morley has removed mountains in the path of the negotiations.

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, pp. 277–89.

I am having the final text printed and translated to be circulated to the Cabinet confidentially. We hope to defer publication to give the Indian Government time to make a communication to the Amir.—Yours, etc.

E. GREY.

The Agreement dealt with Persia, Afghanistan, and Thibet. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the clauses that refer to the two last countries: they gave no trouble afterwards, and those that concerned Persia will be found in the published papers.

In its primary and cardinal object, the security of the Indian frontier, the Agreement was completely successful. There were no more nerves or apprehensions about that. Thus was the real *raison d'être* and the achievement of it the real justification of the Agreement.

But a long train of minor troubles followed.

It had been my hope to conclude and publish the Agreement before Parliament rose; but the negotiations dragged on and were not finished till Parliament was on the eve of adjournment. When the Agreement was signed the Indian Government very naturally demanded that publication should be delayed, till they had had time to communicate it, with their own explanations, to the Amir of Afghanistan. Publication was therefore de-



layed for some weeks for this reason, and when it was seen that the Agreement had been concluded while Parliament was still sitting, and not published till after Parliament had risen, the charge was brought that publication had been deliberately withheld to keep the House of Commons in the dark. It was one of the instances in which a perfectly plain and straightforward account has to be given with the certainty that it will be treated as a pretext and not accepted as a valid reason.

Persia did not like agreements between Britain and Russia ; she had regarded enmity between her two great neighbours as her security, and was used to playing off one against the other. The opportunity for that sport had come to an end.

The real cause of trouble, however, was that the " integrity and independence " of Persia, so tenderly cherished in the Preamble, did not in practice exist when the Agreement was made. Persia was honeycombed by concessions, particularly to Russia for telegraphs, Cossack officers, roads, and so forth ; she owed money to Russia and to Britain, and some of her revenues were pledged as security ; she was in want of more money ; her finances were in disorder ; her internal troubles frequently threatened the lives or property of foreigners in outlying districts, and thus compelled, or at any rate invited, interference

to protect them. This latter consideration applied particularly to the parts near the Russian frontier and in the Russian zone of interest. I had never expected that the Agreement would diminish Russian activity in the north of Persia. It was impossible that the hands of the clock, which had already marked so much time in the lapse of Persian independence, should be put back, but I hoped that the clock might be stopped. And so in a sense it was, for the Russians kept their interference strictly to the north. Russian Foreign Ministers, freed from the apprehension of British rivalry at Teheran, were ready to be easy and to go slow, but Russian agents were apt to regard themselves as having a free hand in the Russian sphere, and in that sphere things were frequently done that were not consistent with "integrity and independence." Both Isvolsky and Sazonof, who succeeded him, did what they could to keep Russian agents within bounds ; but Russian government was a despotism without discipline. Different Ministers and different diplomatic agents pursued different politics. Russian agents were of all sorts ; some were able and clever ; some were not ; some accepted a friendly policy towards Britain, some did not ; some meant well, some did not, and some meant nothing at all. Had the Tsar been a Cæsar, a Cromwell, or a Napoleon,

he might have brought this chaos into order and discipline, or he might have perished in the attempt. The successive Foreign Ministers, I believe, did what they could, but incidents frequently occurred in Persia of which we were bound to complain. My remonstrances were sometimes strong, and the Russian Foreign Minister would get restive. Members of the House of Commons got restive because they thought my remonstrances were not strong enough. These were, as a matter of fact, often too strong to be published, if friendly relations were to be preserved.

Russian conduct in Persia was not different from what it had been before the Anglo-Russian Agreement; the trouble now was that this conduct was held to concern us in a way that it had not done before. In previous days British Governments had not been held responsible for Russian dealings with Persia: all they had been required to do was to guard against the defence of India being prejudiced by what happened in Persia. Now we were partners with Russia in an Agreement that purported to maintain the integrity and independence of Persia. This gave us technically a title, might indeed be said to impose upon us an obligation, to restrain or influence the conduct of our partner. There was constant trouble in the House of Commons, and sometimes it seemed as if the Agreement would

end by making matters worse between Britain and Russia than they had been before. The Russian view of the situation was that, as long as they kept to their own sphere and we were secure on the Indian side, they ought not to be worried.

Very disagreeable trouble arose about Persian finance. Persian finance was hopeless without Western advice. Finance was not the strong point of Russians; a British financial adviser in Teheran, the Russian sphere, was out of the question. European advisers would be suspected, certainly by Russia and probably by us, of using influence in favour of their own countries, perhaps of furthering some political policy. I suggested the choice of an American, who would be outside all politics. The Russians did not like it, but they agreed, and Mr. Shuster was invited to Teheran. Had he accepted the situation as he found it at Teheran, and made the best of it, he would, in spite of all difficulties and drawbacks, have done much for Persian finance; but his method was that of "Hands off" to Britain and Russia. As far as we were concerned, we should not have minded. A strong, independent Persia was what we desired, though we knew it to be impossible. To the Russians, however, Mr. Shuster's method meant the destruction in their own sphere of the position to which for

generations they had been accustomed. It presently became evident that, to avoid a Russian occupation of Teheran, Mr. Shuster must leave it. His departure was a loss, but it was the lesser of the two evils. His aims were admirable and just, but he had not realized that Russian interference in the north of Persia could only be ousted by force ; that Britain was not prepared to embark on a great European war for that purpose, and that Britain was the only country that had any interest in seeing Russia restrained. He attempted what was good, but what could only be done by force ; and there was no force available for the purpose.

Persia tried my patience more than any other subject. I once told Benckendorff that if Russia made things too difficult the policy of friendly agreement with her might become impossible. In that case I should resign, for I could not myself pursue any other policy, and if Russia made this policy impossible I should leave it to someone else to adopt and pursue another.

I have traced some of the after-history of this Anglo-Russian Agreement in order that the narrative of other events may not be interrupted later on by having to recur to it. I return now to its beginning.

When Parliament met again there was a debate on it in the House of Commons. The

Agreement was accepted, but with some criticism from the Conservative Opposition, that it was not sufficiently favourable to British interests. It was explained by me and defended with force and breadth of view by John Morley.

One pleasant incident may be recalled in connexion with it. When Isvolsky was in London after its conclusion, I asked Benckendorff to bring him to dine at my house, then in Queen Anne's Gate. John Morley and Hardinge were the only other guests. We talked long and freely, and this Anglo-Russian Agreement was, so far as I recollect, the main subject of conversation. I was a little apprehensive about this entertainment; my manner of living had every comfort, but there was no state about it, no formality, no men-servants, no party, nothing to do honour to the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs. There was a question in my mind whether he would consider the homeliness of his entertainment a compliment or a slight. I heard afterwards that he considered the informality a compliment, and said to Benckendorff when they went away together, "I believe now what you have told me; these people are really friendly."

Isvolsky ceased to be Minister for Foreign Affairs long before the war, and I had communication with him only twice after he left

St. Petersburg. The impression made by what has since come to light about his doings as Ambassador at Paris is far from favourable ; but, as Minister at St. Petersburg, he did his best under considerable difficulties to work the Anglo-Russian Agreement with Persia, Afghanistan, and Thibet in the spirit in which it was made and intended.

The other transaction of importance that I had with him concerned the Straits. It was dealt with when he came to London in 1908, when he was in sore trouble over the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and his controversy thereon with d'Aehrenthal, then Minister for Foreign Affairs at Vienna.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SECOND CRISIS (BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA)

Russia, Austria, and Balkan Policy—The Young Turk Revolution—An Austrian Announcement—The British Attitude—The Opening of the Straits—A Russian Demand—Isvolsky's Explanations at Cowes—Serbian Demand for Compensation—A Serious Situation—Russian Support and its Withdrawal—Consternation in Russia—A Charge Refuted—An Ominous Parallel—The Question of the Congo—Humanitarianism and Politics—Cabinet Differences—The Eight Dreadnoughts.

It would be impossible, without a whole additional volume, to give anything like a full account of the years that intervened between 1907 and 1914, nor is it necessary to do this. The line in which British foreign policy was moving has already been explained: we continued to follow that line. All that need be done is to give a condensed account of two or three of the more striking incidents or crises.

The various efforts to improve Turkish government in Macedonia have little interest and no importance now. They were intolerably wearisome, very disagreeable, and painfully futile. We took an active part in them, but our motive was disinterested. Had we considered our political interest, we should



have left the question alone. As I have already explained, our activity in protesting against Turkish misrule diminished our influence and was therefore adverse to British commercial interests in Turkey. But humanitarian feeling in Britain and the persisting sympathy for Christian populations under Turkish rule was so strong that British political and material interests were overborne by it. All the sympathy of British Secretaries for Foreign Affairs was with this sentiment, and their action was inspired by this motive, though each successive occupant of the Foreign Office may well have felt choked by despair of achieving any measure of success. Macedonian Reforms could be dealt with only in concert with other Powers. Not one of the other Powers was disinterested; not one of them believed that Britain was disinterested. Each was conscious of some political motive of its own, and they all invented some political motive that was attributed to us.

Prestige and influence in the Balkans were cardinal points of Russian and Austrian policy. Neither could afford to risk its position for philanthropic reasons: each watched the other, and their action in Macedonian diplomacy was conditioned by distrust of each other and anxiety lest one should get an advantage at the expense of the other.

Both regarded our activity as a more or less unreasonable encroachment upon a sphere in which they had direct political interests and we had none.

Germany was thinking only of her political influence and the commercial expansion, that depended on it, in Turkey. She would risk none of this for the sake of philanthropy, and took care to handle the subject of Macedonia in such a way that what we or other Powers lost by annoying the Sultan at Constantinople should go to enhance the German position there.

France, just escaped from trouble about Morocco and apprehensive of more to come, wished to avoid trouble elsewhere. She too had her commercial interests at Constantinople, and she was neither inclined nor could she afford to head a crusade against the Sultan of Turkey. In the middle sat the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, well aware of every element in the situation, resenting the worry that was caused for him, but sure that with a combination on his part of tact and obstinacy the result would always be stalemate. In these conditions the question of Macedonian Reforms was like a bog; the Powers who plunged into it soon sank up to their knees and stuck there, bickering with each other. The whole region has passed over from Turkey, and there is no need here to justify,

criticize, or give an account of the part that we and others took in trying to improve or mitigate Turkish rule in Macedonia.

In 1908 came the Young Turk Revolution, and the power of Abdul Hamid and his detestable camarilla was overthrown. The first news we received of the Revolution were touching in the account they gave of joy and good-will. For a moment the subject races in European Turkey seemed to lose their hatred of the Turk and of each other. I sympathized with the enthusiasm, and was keen that the new order should have every chance. Those who knew Turkey well warned us that the "young" Turks, men like Enver and Talaat, were much like the "old" Turks, but it was so pleasant to indulge the larger hope that I would not heed these warnings. The sequel destroyed the hopes and underlined the warnings. The history of the French Revolution, the experience in our own time of the Turkish and the Russian Revolutions, show that, bad as despotism is, doomed as it is to work its own ruin, the first-fruits of its overthrow are not love and liberty.

I was still, however, in the stage of hope and sympathy with young Turks, when, in the autumn of 1908, Austria announced that she had changed the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina into annexation. Turkey was

indeed to be given the Sandjak as compensation, but Austria's act and decision were quite arbitrary. Turkey had not been consulted, or asked to consent, and the change was therefore a blow to Turkish prestige. A cruel blow it seemed to the budding hopes of better things in Turkey. Besides this, it was the alteration of a European Treaty to which other Powers as well as Turkey were parties. To us the territorial changes were indifferent: it mattered not to us that Austria should annex instead of merely occupying Bosnia and Herzegovina; but, besides sympathy with the new hope in Turkey, we felt that the arbitrary alteration of a European Treaty by one Power without the consent of the other Powers who were parties to it struck at the root of all good international order. We therefore took a very firm stand on principle, and said that, though our interests were not involved, we would not recognize Austria's action, and the change she had made, till all the other Powers who were parties to the treaty were ready to do so. Russia was offended, Turkey was protesting; we would do nothing to make it difficult for Austria to get their consent, but she must get it, before we would recognize the change in the treaty.

The following documents will suffice to show the line taken by us from the first.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen*

FOREIGN OFFICE,  
October 5, 1908.

With regard to Baron d'Aehrenthal's letter of the 28th ultimo to Sir A. Hardinge, which I have seen, His Excellency should be reminded that Austria-Hungary is a party to the Treaty of London, and consequently to the Protocol of January 17, 1871, which is attached to it. In this it is stipulated that the engagements into which any Power has entered can only be broken or modified with the full assent of the Contracting Parties, and after a friendly agreement has been arrived at. A deliberate violation or alteration of the Berlin Treaty, undertaken without previous consultation with the other Powers, of which in this case Turkey is the most affected, could never be approved or recognized by His Majesty's Government. This should be represented to the Austrian Government, and you should impress upon them how necessary it is that their decision to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina should be reconsidered.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson*

FOREIGN OFFICE,  
October 5, 1908.

It is the general feeling here that the new Turkish régime is deserving of consideration, and that it has met with bad treatment.

The situation is complicated, and needs careful handling, and we cannot yet approach the Russian Government on the subject; but the following is the line of action which I would wish to follow:

If my expectations are not deceived, Turkey, while merely protesting against the action of Austria and Bulgaria, will claim some compensation for herself. In this case, I hope, that we shall find ourselves in line with the Russian Government in adopting an attitude friendly to the Porte in the negotiations which will take place among the Powers.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir G. Lowther*

FOREIGN OFFICE,  
October 5, 1908.

Rifaat Pasha has been informed by me that, in regard to both the above questions, our answer will be that the alteration of an International Treaty by any one Power, without the consent of the other Contracting Parties, cannot be considered by us to be within the rights of that Power; and until we know the opinions of the other Powers, and especially those of Turkey, to whom the question is more important than to anyone else, the action of Austria and Bulgaria cannot be recognized.

I said that Turkey had, in my opinion, suffered bad treatment; that we were thoroughly convinced of the peaceful motives, devotion to internal reforms, and integrity of the new régime, which commanded our fullest sympathy. Rifaat Pasha consulted me as to whether a declaration of war was advisable. I replied that, in my opinion, the new régime could not possibly profit by war. Turkey, at present, required chiefly money and time. By going to war she would lose both. Turkey suffered no tangible loss through the annexation of the two provinces to Austria, or through the Bulgarian

declaration of independence, although, as far as prestige and sentiment were concerned, both these steps were injurious ; in the event of a protest, or, later on, of a demand on the part of Turkey for compensation, any proposals which secured that her interests were fairly considered would have our support. Rifaat Pasha enquired as to the possible nature of such compensation, to which I replied that I was uncertain whether it would be practicable to give a money indemnity, and if it would be acceptable to the Porte ; I only wished to suggest that the matter should be considered in this light, because in my opinion Turkey had been badly treated, and, although His Majesty's Government would not suggest it, the present complications might result in the meeting of a Conference, at which we should hope to see her interests duly considered.

To this position we adhered, and in the end Turkey received compensation in money and accepted the change of the *status quo* that had been made by the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and by Bulgaria's change from a Principality to a Kingdom.

Another more difficult and more delicate question for us was that of the opening of the Straits. The Tsar came on his yacht to visit King Edward at Cowes. Isvolsky came with him, and, in a long informal talk with Asquith and me, Isvolsky expounded his grievance against Baron d'Aehrenthal, the Austrian Foreign Minister. Isvolsky held

forth to us at great length, and with energy and point. He spoke in English, and the performance in a foreign language was an impressive *tour de force*. Asquith commented to me on it as a remarkable feat ; but we were not concerned with or required to take a hand in Isvolsky's personal grievance against d'Aehrenthal. Isvolsky came on to London and there propounded the question of opening the Straits. He may have had this in view from the beginning, and may have allowed himself to be compromised by d'Aehrenthal about Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to raise the question of the Straits with effect ; or he may have rushed to it for compensation, after finding himself compromised. It did not matter to us which of these hypotheses was correct. I had foreseen from the beginning that, if we were to maintain friendly relations with Russia, we must abandon the policy of blocking her access to the sea. I was therefore prepared to discuss the matter.

But the moment was very inopportune. Turkey was hurt and sore at the slight put upon her by Austria and Bulgaria. It was hard enough that she should suffer this at the outset of what we hoped was a new and better era at Constantinople. We could not agree to add to her hardships by forcing upon her at once the embarrassing question of the Straits. If, later on, the consent of



Turkey was obtained, this must be by satisfactory voluntary agreement and not by pressure or squeeze.

There was also a difficulty not of time, but inherent in the conditions on which the Straits should be open. A simple opening of the Straits to all ships of war of all nations would enable foreign fleets to assemble in the Black Sea at any time : this would not suit Russia at all, and would in fact be very disagreeable to her. On the other hand, we would not agree to Russian ships of war having the sole and exclusive right of passage through the Straits in time of war, when Turkey was neutral.

The following documents will illustrate the course of my conversation with Isvolsky.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson*

FOREIGN OFFICE,  
October 12, 1908.

The following proposals have been made by Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs for subjects to be discussed in limited Conference. If they are considered acceptable by Turkey and the other Powers we are prepared to agree to them.

The Conference should not deal with Dardanelles question, which Russia and Turkey should discuss privately, Turkey's consent being necessary before any change could be made. M. Isvolsky wishes to

secure for Russia and the other States bordering on the Black Sea the right of using the Dardanelles for not more than three warships at once, on the condition that they agree not to anchor or stop there. He desires a promise from us not to oppose this arrangement, but it seems to me too one-sided to commend itself to public opinion here ; in time of war, at any rate, reciprocal rights would be looked for ; without some such arrangements, Mediterranean shipping would be in danger from warships, which could make raids upon them from the Black Sea, and take refuge either there or in the Dardanelles, whither they could not be pursued.

It is not, we think, the moment to discuss the Dardanelles question, which might make it appear as if Russia were pursuing selfish motives in profiting by the recent events and concluding a bargain with Austria.

The attitude of Russian officials with regard to events in Persia is also unpopular here.

Matters would be facilitated if public opinion could be convinced that reform in Turkey met with the warm approval of Russia.

If Russia were to join disinterestedly in settling the Near Eastern crisis to the advantage of Turkey, public opinion here would become more favourably disposed to her. His Majesty's Government see great difficulty in securing the acceptance here of a one-sided arrangement as to the Dardanelles, though they are quite prepared to agree to the opening of the Straits under proper safeguards. I should be glad to receive any information with regard to the feeling prevalent in Russia on the subject which you may be able to supply.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

October 12, 1908.

SIR,—After the meeting of the Cabinet to-day I saw M. Isvolsky and told him that, though I wished to examine in the Department the details of his programme for a Conference, it had been generally approved by the Cabinet.

He then discussed what the next step should be. In his opinion it was desirable that a Conference should be announced as soon as possible, and, after considering various capitals, he expressed a strong opinion in favour of Rome as the most suitable meeting-place. He also asked me what was my view as to the way in which the invitations to the Conference should be issued—for instance, should Russia, France, and England jointly send them out?

I said I thought it would be very desirable to ascertain the views of Germany before issuing any invitations. Count Metternich had told me the desire of the German Government was to secure as fair terms as possible for Turkey and to smooth things over. If we issued the invitations without consulting her we might not have her good-will. So far as I could see, there was nothing in the programme to which Germany could object reasonably; and, by first ascertaining whether the programme met with her acceptance, we should prevent an apparent division of the Powers into two camps before the opening of the Conference.

M. Isvolsky dwelt upon the difficulty of getting Austria to accept the programme, as it included the discussion of the subject of Bosnia.

I suggested that, as the German Government wished to smooth things over, they would probably be able to arrange this.

It would be necessary to ascertain whether Turkey accepted the programme.

M. Isvolsky then asked me what I had to tell him about the Straits.

I told him frankly that the opinion of the Cabinet was that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to get public opinion here to accept a one-sided arrangement about the Straits. At the time of the Anglo-Russian Convention we had contemplated that, in the course of time, a confidence would grow up between England and Russia and make a favourable arrangement possible. But I found that, for instance, the action of Russian officers in Persia in suppressing the Constitution had created an unfavourable effect on public opinion here. I heard to-day that Russian officers were being sent with Cossack troops to put down the Nationalists at Tabreez. This, again, would make an unfavourable impression. People here would be still further unfavourably impressed if Russia sought advantages to herself from the present crisis in the Near East. If we came to a one-sided arrangement, which people here would argue necessitated an increase of our naval force in the Mediterranean, and if we altered an international treaty very greatly to the advantage of Russia, and to what would be considered our disadvantage, without getting anything in return, we should be making a concession which it would be very difficult to defend here at this moment.

I therefore thought the time was very inopportune.

M. Isvolsky dwelt upon the entire change of Russian feeling towards Turkey. Russia now desired to support Turkey as a barrier against the Austrian advance.

I suggested that Russia might demonstrate her good-will to Turkey by working for such a settlement of the present crisis as would safeguard Turkish interests without any direct advantage to Russia herself—that would create a very good impression here.

As a detail, I pointed out the disadvantage it would be to us if, in time of war, when Turkey was at peace, one or two cruisers could come out through the Straits and harry British commerce without our being able to pursue them back into the Black Sea.

M. Isvolsky again dwelt with emphasis upon the unfortunate consequences which must follow if, once more, when there was an opportunity for settling the question of the Straits in favour of Russia, England opposed, and this time her opposition alone prevented a settlement.

I could only repeat that I saw great difficulties in any arrangement which was not reciprocal.

M. Isvolsky asked me what he was to telegraph to St. Petersburg—was he to telegraph a refusal?

I told him I had explained the difficulties which the Government felt in their way. We had had only a very short time to consider the matter, and I suggested that he should turn over the difficulties in his own mind before we considered the subject as closed.—I am, etc.

E. GREY.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

October 13, 1908.

SIR,—Late in the evening of the 12th I had some further conversation with M. Isvolsky about the question of the Dardanelles.

He told me that the point I had put to him, as to Russian cruisers being able to come out through the Straits into the Mediterranean in time of war and being able to retire again into the Straits free from pursuit, had not occurred to him. He thought it might be met by a provision that, in time of war, when Turkey was neutral, she should observe her neutrality by giving equal facilities for passage through the Straits to all the belligerents.

I impressed upon him very strongly that I had no wish to send him away with the idea that we could not entertain any proposal about the Straits.

M. Isvolsky observed that the French Press were entirely on the side of opening the Straits.

I told him I had not given him the negative answer which he had deprecated. On the other hand, it was very difficult to give a positive answer, such as he had asked, for the reasons I had stated in the afternoon. The Cabinet felt that the time was exceedingly inopportune, and that they could not get public opinion here to accept at this moment a one-sided arrangement. I could satisfy the French Press any day, by saying that we entirely agreed with their view, which was that the Straits should be open on the same terms for all. But I should not help matters between Russia and us by so doing, for this view was one which was disliked by Russia.

I again impressed on M. Isvolsky the advantage of settling the present crisis in the Near East satisfactorily without seeking advantages for Russia or England.

I admitted that the proposal he had made as to equality in time of war did introduce an element of reciprocity, which had not been before the Cabinet, and which I would submit to them.—I am, etc.,

E. GREY.

The following despatch, which covers more ground, is perhaps worth printing here :

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

October 14, 1908.

SIR,—M. Isvolsky arrived in London on the 9th instant and called upon me at the Foreign Office on the 10th instant.

His Excellency began his conversation with me by a long explanation of what had passed between him and Baron d'Aehrenthal.

It was, in substance, what I had already heard, but he spoke very frankly of Baron d'Aehrenthal as being tortuous and insincere and always wishing to compromise the person with whom he was dealing. It was not true that he (M. Isvolsky) had given his consent in advance to what Austria had done about Bosnia. He had simply exchanged views, and had intended to discuss in Paris and London, afterwards, the possibility of the annexation of Bosnia by Austria and the consequences of such an eventuality. Meanwhile, this had been sprung upon him.

He made the most of the compensation offered by Austria as regards Novi-Bazar. In Austrian hands this would have prepared the way for an advance, and have been a wedge driven into the Slav States.

He emphasized the fact that these breaches of the International Treaty should be dealt with by a Conference, and he proposed that a Conference should be announced as soon as possible with a definite programme to deal with Bulgarian independence, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Novi-Bazar and Montenegro.

But it would not be enough simply to ratify what had already been done ; that would not secure enough compensation either for Turkey or the other Balkan States.

Bulgaria had shown, in this matter, no consideration for Russian wishes, and Russia was prepared to be stiff in dealing with her. It might be arranged at the Conference that Bulgaria should pay for the Eastern Roumelian tribute and the railway. Serbia might have some rectification of her frontier, but it must not be at the expense of Turkey. There might also be a revision of the regulations about the Danube which would put the Balkan States on a more favourable footing ; this would be in the nature of compensation to them at the expense of Austria. For Turkey, the hope might be held out that, if things went well, the Financial Commission and the joint right of superintendence given to the Powers with regard to Macedonia and Armenia by treaty would be done away with ; and that the Capitulations also would be altered, if the Turkish Government justified such a step.



Russia would not raise the question of the Straits at the Conference.

M. Isvolsky urged very strongly that, if Russia could satisfy Turkey that an arrangement about the Straits was safe for Turkish interests, England should not oppose it. He told me that there had been great opposition in Russia to the Anglo-Russian Convention. He had had to spend great energy in getting it accepted in Russia. All the Liberal and advanced elements in Russia were in favour of an understanding with England ; but the reactionary elements were against it, and would like to upset the Convention. The Emperor was, by training and education, not on the Liberal side. It was possible to keep him reconciled to reforms in Russia only by proving to him that things were going better ; for instance, whereas, two years ago, there was a state of active revolution, the state of affairs was now much improved. In the same way it would be fatal to a good understanding with England if, when the question of the Straits were raised, it was found that England blocked the way and that no improvement followed from good relations with England.

His proposal to Turkey would be that ships of war belonging to the Riverain Powers on the Black Sea should have a right of way through the Straits. There might be regulations that not more than three vessels should go through at a time, and that no other vessels should go through for twenty-four hours after the first. Such regulations would, of course, only apply in times when Turkey was at peace. In time of war, Turkey would be able to do as she pleased.

In other words, the closing of the Straits would be maintained, subject to a limited servitude of this kind, in favour of Russia and the Riverain States.

M. Isvolsky went on to say that the present was a most critical moment. It might either consolidate and strengthen the good relations between England and Russia, or it might upset them altogether. His own position was at stake, for he was entirely bound up with the policy of a good understanding with England, which he had advocated against all opposition.

I asked him to give me a draft of what he proposed with regard to the Conference, so that I might have something definite to put before the Cabinet ; this he promised to do.

I said I realized how critical the moment was. We were most anxious to work with Russia. We were in favour of the new régime in Turkey, not in order that we might support Turkey against Russia, but because we regarded an independent and well-governed Turkey as the only alternative to anarchy and confusion.

M. Isvolsky said the Russian desire now was to be friendly with Turkey. They did not wish to have Constantinople for themselves ; it was not a place which could be held like Gibraltar ; it had to be made a capital ; they could not make it their own capital, and they would not wish to see it in any hands but those of Turkey. Therefore they wished to have a peaceful and well-governed Turkey, with whom they could be friendly.

I told him I recognized the Russian feeling about the Straits ; but the proposal he had now put before me was not the same as that which Count Bencken-

dorff had discussed with me at the time of the Anglo-Russian Convention. The proposal then had been that, while Russia should have egress from the Black Sea through the Straits, other Powers should have liberty to send their vessels of war into the Straits without going into the Black Sea.

M. Isvolsky pointed out that, as Russia would not ask for any right to stay in the Straits, it would be useless to grant a right of access to the Straits without staying there and without going on into the Black Sea. But he was not putting the proposal before me now on the ground that I had made any promise previously. He was putting it forward from the point of view of good relations.

If Russia did not make the proposal now it might be blocked by Germany or Austria at some future time; and he hoped that, if Russia could get the consent of Turkey voluntarily to an arrangement such as he had suggested, we would not oppose it.

I told M. Isvolsky I must have time to consult the Prime Minister and my colleagues, who had seen the proposal made some time ago, but to whom this would be quite new.

I urged that some immediate proof of confidence in the new régime in Turkey and good-will to it should be shown by offering a guaranteed loan if Turkey desired it. This would at once produce a general feeling of confidence and tranquillity.—I am, etc.,

E. GREY.

Eventually a memorandum embodying our views about the Straits was given to Isvolsky;

he was partially, though not completely, pacified, and the question of the Straits was for the time allowed to rest.

There came upon us all, however, another and more formidable affair. Serbia demanded compensation for the change in the *status quo* made by Austria, to the disadvantage, as Serbia considered, of her own interests. We thought a demand by Serbia for territory would not be reasonable, but that some economic concession to facilitate the transport of Serbian exports to the Adriatic might provide an innocent solution.

Serbia was obstinate and headstrong, Austria was haughty, hard and stern. How serious the situation became will appear from the following telegram from me to Nicolson :—

*Sir E. Grey to Sir A. Nicolson*

FOREIGN OFFICE,  
*February 27, 1909.*

Your difficulties of Russia's position, which, as reported in your telegrams Nos. 102, 103, and 104 of the 26th instant, M. Isvolsky has explained to you, have, as you will see, been put before the French and German Governments in my communications to them in terms similar to those used by M. Isvolsky.

But the facts of the situation are accurately represented by the observation made by you to His Excellency as reported in the first sentence of your telegram No. 103. M. Isvolsky must recognize that, without a successful war, no advantages,

except economic concessions, can be obtained for Serbia, and that war must inevitably ensue unless claims for territorial compensation are abandoned by Serbia.

When M. Isvolsky was in London I understood from His Excellency that in the end these claims would in all probability have to be withdrawn, and I explained to him that he could rely on our diplomatic support in obtaining such redress as was possible for Serbia, but that we should be unwilling to give him armed assistance.

The position of the Serbian Government is, in my opinion, that they have announced their readiness to submit to the decision of the Powers, but that public opinion at home will not allow them to abandon of their own accord claims to territorial compensation.

I received information yesterday from Count Metternich that his Government intended to make some proposal to France and His Majesty's Government. This had not as yet reached us, but it is probable that it will take the form of a suggestion that, provided that Serbia will abandon her demand for territorial compensation, Austria should be asked by the Powers to take into favourable consideration the granting of economic concessions to Serbia.

I have not altered my view, which I expressed to the French Government, that it is impossible to expect Russia to advise Serbia to abandon territorial claims unless Germany has previously given substantial assurance that she will support the demand for economic concessions from Austria. Russia cannot now any longer delay deciding whether she will support Serbia in the event of war or whether, when the

moment for decisive action arrives, she will tell Serbia that she finds it impossible to support her demands, as being contrary to the interests of peace. It is possible that M. Isvolsky is reluctant to come forward himself and explain to the Serbian Government what are really the facts of the case, and, if so, His Majesty's Government might join with France in undertaking this task in the interests of peace. But it would first be necessary that we should ourselves be aware of Russia's intentions.

If war were to take place, it would probably in the end embroil the greater part of the Continent, and even Russia must see that such a risk for the sake of Serbia's demands for territorial compensation is utterly disproportionate to the end in view. Above is only intended as expression of our opinion, and since reading your telegram No. 105, which has just reached me, I authorize you to use your own discretion as to how much of this you mention to M. Isvolsky.

The probability is, that if Russia had told Serbia from the first that she must not expect more than economic concessions, the situation would never have become dangerous, and Russia would have emerged with the credit of having done, at any rate, something for Serbia. As it was, Russia was stiff for a time, and then suddenly threw up the sponge and collapsed unconditionally. The strain on Isvolsky's temperament had been very great, and he seemed to have had a sudden reaction at the end to despair and disgust.

It was an unpleasant finish, as the following despatch from Nicolson shows :

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir E. Grey*

ST. PETERSBURG,

March 29, 1909.

SIR,—It was only on the morning of the 27th instant that the general public became aware that the Russian Government had consented, if asked by Austria-Hungary, to the unconditional abrogation of Article 25 of the Berlin Treaty, or, in other words, to recognize the annexation by Austria-Hungary of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It had always been understood that the Russian Government were, in conjunction with the Governments of Great Britain and of France, maintaining the attitude which had been announced on more than one occasion, both officially and publicly, that the modifications of an international treaty by Austria-Hungary on her own initiative, as well as the arbitrary infractions of the same treaty by Bulgaria, would not be recognized until the matter has been discussed and examined by all the Signatory Powers in conjunction with the compensations due to other States whose interests had been directly or indirectly affected by the acts of last autumn. It was therefore with surprise, and indeed with bewildered consternation, that the public learnt that the Russian Government, who were supposed to have under their especial care the interests of the smaller Balkan States, and whose influence in the Balkan Peninsula had been endangered, had consented suddenly to abandon the position which they had hitherto assumed, and to sanction the act which Austria-

Hungary had executed some months ago. It was considered not only in the Press, but also, so far as I have been able to observe and ascertain, in all classes of society, that Russia had suffered a deep humiliation, and had renounced the traditional part which she had hitherto played in South-East Europe, and in the prosecution of which she had made so great sacrifices in the past. Even among those who take but little interest in foreign affairs, and who do not feel much sympathy for the smaller Balkan States, whom they regard as troublesome and ungrateful younger brethren, there was a feeling of bitter resentment that, at a most critical moment for two of the minor Slav States, their natural protector had abandoned them to the mercy of a German Power; and that Russia had consented, without making any reservations in favour of those who had looked to her for assistance, if not material, in any case moral and diplomatic, to give her seal to an act which had been committed by Austria-Hungary to the detriment of Slav interests. I have been assured, by those who have witnessed many various phases in the recent history of Russia, that there has never previously been a moment when the country had undergone such humiliation, and, though Russia has had her troubles and trials, both external and internal, and has suffered defeats in the field, she has never had, for apparently no valid cause, to submit to the dictation of a foreign Power.

As I am sending this despatch by post, I do not like to enter into fuller details or to draw certain consequences which may possibly follow from the step which the Russian Government have taken. I will only notice that voices are being raised



whether the ally and friend of Russia have proved sufficiently strong supporters at the hour of need.

The *Golos Pravdy*, the organ of the Octobrist Party, has given expression of these doubts in no uncertain tones, and has drawn the attention of its readers to the fact that the combination of the three Powers was too weak to withstand the first shock which is sustained from the Central Powers. It is considered out of the question that Russia could have taken the recent step without previous consultation with her ally and her friend ; and, indeed, it has been spread about that it was on the advice of Great Britain that the step was taken. When this version has come to my ears, I have naturally given it a direct denial. The whole truth will doubtless gradually be known, but when it is known it is hardly likely to mitigate the feeling of humiliation which at present is weighing so heavily on the public mind.—I have, etc.,

A. NICOLSON.

There was more unpleasantness still. I was accused in Austria, and I think in Germany too, of having fomented trouble and tried to provoke a European war. The following telegram to Cartwright gives some indication of my feeling at the injustice of the charge :

*Sir E. Grey to Sir F. Cartwright*

FOREIGN OFFICE,

*December 23, 1908.*

I can only qualify as preposterous and utterly absurd the Austrian suspicions that His Majesty's

Government are desirous of bringing about a European war. (See your telegram No. 104 of the 21st instant.) Both public opinion here and the foreign policy of His Majesty's Government are alike opposed to such a scheme. So far from ever having encouraged the Governments of Serbia, Montenegro, and Turkey in an attitude of opposition to Austria, we might fairly claim that it is to some extent due to our influence that the Ottoman Government has shown itself ready to negotiate with Austria. We have used all our influence in the cause of peace by discouraging impossible claims and demands and by curbing the violence of public feeling, which was outraged by the policy of Baron d'Aehrenthal himself. Our power to preserve the peace of Europe can only be weakened by the unjust accusations which Austria is bringing against us, and which, moreover, are accepted as true in the Austrian dominions.

You may speak in this sense and in that of my previous telegram on the subject when discussing the matter with Baron d'Aehrenthal or any other influential persons.

This caused me little concern, for I thought it only a personal matter. In fact, it had a much deeper significance: it was a symptom of that inveterate and ineradicable distrust which poisoned European diplomacy and made any healthy growth impossible.

The following extracts from despatches are worth quoting. The first is from my official

record of a conversation with Metternich at the Foreign Office on October 9, 1908 :

Count Metternich said that Austria had given no warning to Germany, who had been just as surprised by what had taken place as the other Powers had been. But, though Germany wished, as he had said, to encourage the new régime in Turkey, she would feel bound in this matter to support her ally and friend.

The second is an extract from a telegram from Goschen, our Ambassador at Vienna, dated October 17, 1908, reporting a conversation with the German Ambassador there :

Herr von Tschirsky, in discussing the annexation question, remarked on the cleverness of Baron d'Aehrenthal in not previously giving a hint to Germany of his intentions. Discussions which might have been uncomfortable for both sides had thus been avoided.

The next quotation is an extract from a telegram from Goschen at Vienna, also dated October 17, 1908 :

German Ambassador presented German Emperor's reply to Emperor of Austria to-day. The Press, to whom the German Ambassador seems to have been rather communicative, reports that the letter was most cordial, congratulating the Emperor upon the annexation and promising support.

Lastly, I give an extract from a report, dated February 11, 1909, made to me by Hardinge, then Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, of his visit to Berlin in attendance upon King Edward. The extract refers to a conversation that Hardinge had with Prince Bülow :

Turning to the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, he (Prince Bülow) assured me that although he had heard of the project after the meeting at Buchlau, Baron d'Aehrenthal's intention to put it into immediate execution had come as a complete surprise to him, and that he had only learnt it at the same time as the news was communicated in London and St. Petersburg. Although he expressed his conviction that Baron d'Aehrenthal may have been justified by the Pan-Serb agitation in the two provinces in his decision to put an end to it by annexation, he did not disguise from me his disapproval of the methods by which Baron d'Aehrenthal had attained his object. It would have been so simple for the Austrian Government to have announced to the Porte that, in view of the new state of affairs prevailing in Turkey, they proposed to dispense with the guarantees, which they had hitherto possessed, for the maintenance of order on the frontiers of the provinces, by withdrawing the Austrian troops from the Sandjak, in return for which the Turkish Government might have been willing to countenance the conversion of the occupation into definite annexation. To such an arrangement Turkey would probably have agreed, and

none of the Powers would have objected. Instead of this, by his precipitate action and seemingly thoughtless procedure, Turkey had been deeply incensed, the Powers affronted, the value as a concession of the evacuation of the Sandjak thrown away, and the Austrian Government compelled in the end to pay an indemnity of two and a half millions. It had been incumbent on the German Government to support Baron d'Aehrenthal throughout this crisis, whatever might be their feelings as to his procedure, but they had, when the opportunity presented itself, given moderating advice.

It is impossible to recount these events of 1908-9 without being struck by an ominous parallel with the crisis of 1914. In 1908, as in 1914, Austria acted without full consultation with her Ally—so the world was told by Von Bülow in the first, and by Von Bethmann-Hollweg in the latter, crisis. In 1908, as in 1914, Germany, while deprecating the headstrong character of Austria's action, thought it necessary to support her Ally. In 1908, as in 1914, Russia felt herself challenged to support Serbia. There the parallel ends. In 1909 Russia preferred humiliation; in 1914 she faced war. Let anyone who has not been impressed by Nicolson's account of the humiliation felt in Russia in 1909 turn back to page 293 and read it again. Let him remember also that this humiliation was branded into Russian feeling by the subse-

quent speech of the German Emperor at Vienna—the exulting speech, in which he spoke of having supported Austria in shining armour. Prestige amongst the Slav nations of South-East Europe was as necessary to Russia as to Austria. Russia could not afford a second blow such as that of 1908-9. And yet in the crisis of 1914, especially after Serbia's disarming reply to the Austrian ultimatum, there was no ruler in Germany great enough to feel that what was essential to the peace of Europe was not the support of Austria in "shining armour," but a wise and strong restraining hand.

Here it is tempting to imagine how a moralist might reflect upon the discredit of the Near East policy of the Powers most concerned in it. For many years under Abdul Hamid (and his successors proved no better) Turkish rule had been a blighting misgovernment, with outbreaks of cruel outrage upon Christian minorities. Austria and Russia, each afraid of the other, each thinking of its own prestige and influence, had let the thing go on. Neither dared risk disturbance of the equilibrium, and the equilibrium was Abdul Hamid. So jealous and fearful were they both, that each was apt to resent as an intrusion even the lone hand of Britain, when it was put forth in the direction of Turkish reforms. Germany feared to see the equi-

brium disturbed, lest consequences should ensue between Austria and Russia, in which she might feel it necessary to be involved. But Germany went further. If Austria and Russia were not moved by humanitarian considerations, Germany openly disregarded them, and made a friend of Abdul Hamid to further her own material interests in Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup>

What has come of all this rivalry, this struggle for prestige and for gain?

The thrones of Berlin, Vienna, and Moscow are empty. Germany, to get on her feet, is receiving international help on terms that would once have seemed incredibly humiliating. The fragment of country of which Vienna is now the capital has been a suppliant to the League of Nations, happily with success, to be saved from annihilation. Russia has had years of internal bloodshed, terror, and untold misery, of which we do not yet see the end.

It would be distorting true perspective to say that lack of idealism in Near East policy was the cause of all this disaster; but it may fairly be said that it was a symptom of things that were the cause, and it was from the Near East that the flash came which fired the train of dire consequences.

<sup>1</sup> See the analysis of German official papers at the time of the Armenian atrocities in 1895, published in *The Times* of Jan. 8, 1924.

The meditations of a moralist on public affairs are apt to become dreamy and far-fetched; perhaps these are so. Yet they may give rise to thoughts that are worth considering by all nations with great responsibilities, and they are not irrelevant to present realities and future contingencies.

One other subject which caused me much anxiety in these days, that of the Belgian Congo, deserves a brief mention.

From the early days of the nineteenth century there have been uprisings of public opinion against glaring abuses and cruelty, when public attention was once concentrated on them. These had their roots in a religious feeling that was deep and strong, even if it was sometimes narrow. This support made men like Wilberforce, Howard, Shaftesbury, and Plimsoll, and a woman such as Florence Nightingale, forces in public life, and made Britain a pioneer in the abolition of slavery, in Factory Acts and in prison reform. But the national conscience was not satisfied by reform of abuses in British territories; it insisted that British Governments should concern themselves with matters for which they had no special responsibility in lands over which they had no control. Gladstone roused it on behalf of Italy, and made it formidable against misrule in Turkey. It bestirred itself concerning slave labour in the Portuguese



colonies, and cruelty in the Congo under King Leopold of Belgium. No British Government could disregard it, and I believe that all the Governments of which I could form an intelligent opinion, those from 1880 onwards, sincerely desired and endeavoured to give effect to it. In doing so they were beset with difficulties; only in the United States was there any similar movement of opinion demanding action outside its own country. And in that vast country the movement was too partial to cause an uprising of national sentiment about such things as Turkish misrule, or to overcome the tradition of non-interference in the old world, handed down from Washington. In other countries, whatever the humane sentiments of individuals may have been about their own affairs, they did not take the form of pressure for philanthropic action abroad that might involve their own Governments in complication with continental neighbours. It was only an island such as Britain that could safely afford to embark on diplomatic crusades. To continental countries, these British efforts were often inconvenient, as in the case of Turkish reforms, and they were often resented, because they were not understood. They sometimes ran counter to obvious British interests, but this did not predispose foreign Governments to think them sincere. On the contrary, it

stimulated them to search deeply for some concealed motive, though the true one lay on the surface before their eyes. It was no wonder, then, that in some instances these efforts of British Governments resulted in friction and futility. Their endeavours brought upon them the obstruction and dislike of foreign Governments, and their want of success exposed them to the criticisms of those at home, whose earnest and conscious rectitude of purpose made them too impatient to reckon or to allow for the difficulties that had to be encountered.

Of one only of these movements will account be given here. To do more would occupy too much space with affairs that were not in the main line of foreign policy.

By the time I returned to the Foreign Office in 1905 the agitation here was running high against cruelty in the Congo under the personal rule of King Leopold. The evidence was based upon a mass of information, including British consular reports, and nobody doubted that the state of things was atrocious. The outcome had been the formation in Britain of the Congo Reform Association, whose object it was to put an end to the abuses. My own feeling was one of detestation of the system and its crimes and of the character of the man who was responsible for them. The Belgian Government and Parliament dis-

claimed and had, in fact, no responsibility for what was done in the Congo. This was solely the personal affair of the King ; but, if he relinquished the Congo, Belgium had the option of taking it. The Congo agitation did not therefore directly affect our relations with the Belgian Government ; but Belgians did not like the attacks upon their King, and the suspicion that in the agitation there was some political motive prejudicial to their future option over the Congo made our action unpopular with them.

My own view of the remedy and of the objective we should set before ourselves was clear. It was the transference of the Congo from the personal rule of King Leopold to the constitutional Government of Belgium. I was convinced that a great and beneficent change would be effected as soon as the administration was in the hands of a Government that was not concerned with trading profits and private gain ; and also that the abuses, of which we heard, could not continue under a Government that had to account for its acts to a freely elected popular Assembly. The transfer of the Congo to Belgium would therefore be a real and effective solution.

This solution was not only practicable, but it was also the only one that would be honourable and politically expedient. To promote any other would be to disregard the indisput-

able right of Belgium to have the Congo, whenever King Leopold relinquished it. Any other settlement would arbitrarily and forcibly pass over and deny the right of a smaller State.

To do this would also be politically unwise, for it would open up a vista of political complications. If Belgium declined to exercise her right to the Congo, France had, by treaty with her, a right to pre-emption. Neither we nor other Powers were party to that treaty, but it was in the knowledge of us all, and we had neither intention nor desire to question the French pre-emption. It would come into operation only if Belgium voluntarily resigned her own right; but it was most improbable that other Powers interested in Africa would acquiesce in seeing Belgium set aside her right and so present to France the whole vast and, in some parts, valuable area of the Congo. France, therefore, would naturally stand up for the rights of Belgium, on which her own contingent interest depended; to ignore those rights would lead to friction with France and would prompt Germany, who had important African possessions adjoining the Congo, to assert her own interest in the question. Portugal, who also had territory adjoining the Congo, might also claim to be admitted to the discussion. In fact, the future of the Congo would become

an international question fraught with unpleasant possibilities.

European Powers had already enough complications on hand, and it would be the height of imprudence, and even of impolicy, to add the Congo to them. On the other hand, if the Congo were transferred to Belgium, not a finger would be stirred or a word said by anyone. The Belgian solution was therefore the only one that would be effective, expedient, and honourable to all concerned. For this we pressed.

Our action was based on the international treaties or arrangements respecting the Congo and Africa in general to which we, with other Powers, were parties. But we got no support from anyone; we were left coldly and severely alone in our representation. Neither France nor Germany desired to share in the unpopularity in Belgium that we incurred by the anti-Congo agitation. Each of them probably wished to avoid the risk of its becoming a political question.

King Leopold resented the British agitation, including no doubt my own speeches and diplomatic action; he even sent me a long personal letter of protest. We continued to make ourselves disagreeable, and we hoped we were making him uncomfortable; it was all we could do. Any sending of force by ourselves into the Congo would have been

regarded with great distrust and jealousy by other Powers, and would have been taken as a sure indication that we meant to get something for ourselves ; the precedent of Egypt, where we had landed with temporary intentions and stayed permanently, would have been vigorously recalled. Our contention that the Congo agitation here was disinterested would have been stultified.

It is not worth while now to examine what share we might claim in having hastened the transfer of the Congo to Belgium. King Leopold did at last relinquish it. From that moment the representations of the British Government ceased ; the Congo Reform Association dissolved itself ; the agitation stopped. This should fairly be noted as proof that the stir of British public opinion about the Congo was, what it professed to be, genuinely philanthropic and disinterested. The transfer of the Congo to Belgium was regarded not only with satisfaction, but with relief ; and the expectation that Congo reform would result proved to be justified, and the hope has been fulfilled.

It is well known that there were from time to time during these years differences of opinion in the Cabinet about naval or military expenditure. Probably they are endemic in all Cabinets, but it is only occasionally

that they attain to epidemic violence. The difference is not on the principle of national safety, but as to the margin of strength necessary to secure it. The most acute crisis in the Liberal Government came over naval expenditure in 1909. Were we to be committed to the construction of eight new battleships, or would six, or even four, be enough for national safety? For some days there was a Cabinet crisis. Eventually it was observed that all eight ships could not be laid down at once, and it was agreed that the construction should proceed in a manner that would not delay the completion of the eight ships if reflection and further knowledge proved them to be necessary, but on the understanding that reduction of the number could be made, if it became apparent that the need for them had been over-estimated. To the public and the Press at this time "eight ships" became a formula, but in the Cabinet the difference was about substance and not formula. No one of us wanted eight ships, unless they were really required; every one of us was prepared to agree to them, if they were proved necessary to secure national safety.

The usual method by which agreement is reached in such crises is as follows:

The difference of opinion is disclosed, stated, and stoutly maintained on each side at a Cabinet. If it is so important and acute as to

make resignation seem certain or probable, individual Ministers of different views seek private talks with each other outside the Cabinet. In this way the strength of their respective arguments is tested ; the amount of concession that each feels he can make is ascertained. Finally, a Cabinet again meets with the knowledge that it is going to agree. This presupposes that the difference of opinion is really about the merits of the question, and is not a pretext put forward for a personal or political object. When it is a pretext for either of these things the procedure is much less pleasant and the prognosis less favourable.

There was often a wrestle, sometimes sluggish, sometimes brisk, about Army Estimates. Haldane had to argue and struggle to get what he asked for ; sometimes he had to economize on what was of secondary importance, in order to get what the War Office felt to be of primary importance. On one occasion temperature rose sufficiently high to cause one of the opponents of Haldane's Estimates to speak of the War Office in conversation as " the Ministry of Slaughter " ; but, in the end, what was regarded as essential was obtained without ill-feeling or rancour.



